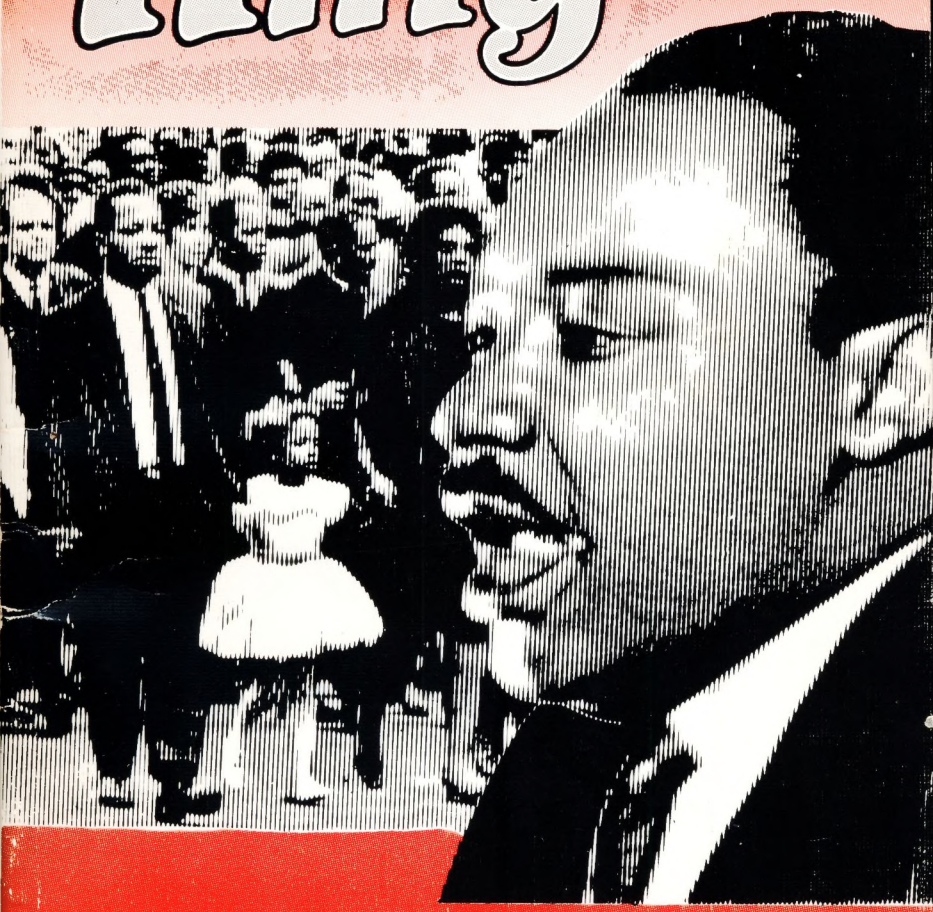
PATRIOT, FIGHTER, HUMANIST

Martin Luther King



PATRIOT, FIGHTER, HUMANIST

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As a New York correspondent of the Soviet newspaper Izvestia *during the 1960s, I naturally endeavoured to understand the serious and complex issues involved in the struggle by black Americans for human and civil rights. Inevitably, I became interested in the magnetic personality of Martin Luther King, the eminent leader of black Americans.*

King was both made and broken by US society. He was assassinated at the age of 39 years. Twenty years have passed since then. Yet King is not forgotten. His name still resounds powerfully on the American public stage and beyond the bounds of the United States. Martin Luther King is clearly assured of a prominent, honoured and enduring place in the history of his country and the history of the 20th century's liberation movement.

Since 1968 when Martin Luther King was killed the question of declaring his birthday a national holiday has been raised fifteen times in the US Congress. A bill to this effect was adopted by Congress and signed by the President in 1983. Now the third Monday of January is marked in the USA as Martin Luther King's birthday every year.

The Russian poet Alexander Blok once observed that a poet has a destiny, not a career. His insight is unquestionably true of poets. However, it is much rarer for public figures to have destinies rather than careers.

But Dr King was a man of such political importance for his country that in his case it is very appropriate to speak of destiny. Though his life was cut off early, he became immortal after his death, for he lives on in the minds of his contemporaries and their descendants. Great people are like torches. They light up the world around us and show us the way.

Martin Luther King struggled against all forms of oppression and racial discrimination, and for the triumph of freedom and justice. In his best-known speech he said that he

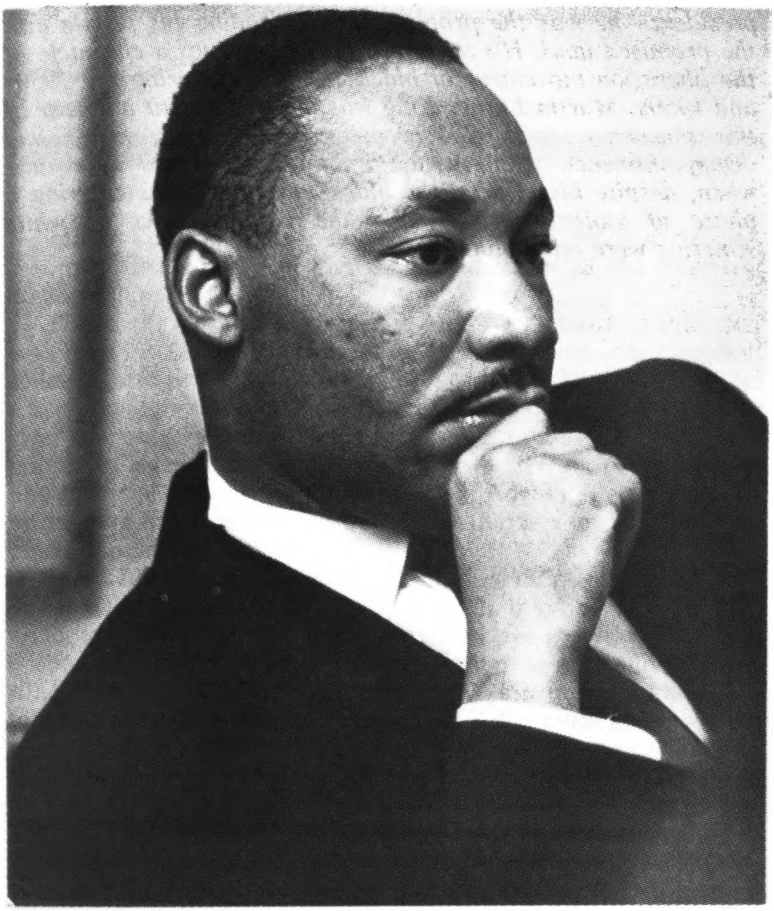
dreamed that "one day ... sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." Did his dream come true?

In short, black Americans, having achieved formal, legal equality, are, in fact, still the victims of inequality.

What, then, did Doctor King accomplish? A lot. He compelled American society to look with fresh eyes at its black fellow citizens. He aroused in black Americans a feeling of self-respect, pride and confidence in their own strength. Finally, he achieved something to which, perhaps, he never gave thought. He himself became an example for those for whom, as he expressed it, "beauty is truth and truth is beauty and for whom the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace is more precious than diamonds or silver or gold."

Martin Luther King... I had seen him at meetings, from the seats reserved for the press. I knew the quietness that filled the hall when he appeared on the rostrum—the quietness of attention and respect. We had met once for a brief moment at the University of Chicago and I had felt the pressure of his hand and seen from close quarters his calm, serious, darkly gleaming eyes, his large, firm lips and his strong chin. I had heard the restrained rumble of his baritone, rising and falling with emotion like a bell, loud, reaching all. Doctor King, as always, had no time to spare and his assistant, dressed like him in the severe black coat of a Baptist pastor, reminded him of his next appointment. I requested an interview for my newspaper and King agreed. But his time, American-style, was already committed far in advance and he did not have his schedule with him; he requested me to refer to his headquarters in Atlanta. I received the answer from his secretary who informed me that Doctor King was not in Atlanta and asked me to await his return. He was constantly travelling and eternally busy. Now, alas, a meeting would not take place. I had wanted to write about the living King, but I would have to write of King dead.

King was killed at the age at which the careers of US politicians are usually just beginning to flourish. King had sought not a career, but justice for millions of black Americans; this black man from Atlanta was, perhaps, known in every American home. World fame, too, was not a goal in itself for him, but had come unexpectedly, as a result of the action of the Birmingham police in unleashing their ferocious German shepherd-dogs on participants in a march in May 1963. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1964 at the age of 35, but did not rest on his Nobel laurels. For him the fate of the



"I tried to love and serve humanity. I was a drum major for justice and peace. I left a committed life behind."

black population of the southern and northern United States, who linked their hopes of a better life with his name, was most important. He aroused such hopes, knew that it would be difficult to justify them, and worked to fulfill them to the end of his life. He was called the president of black America, but for the uneducated black sharecroppers of Alabama and South Carolina, Georgia and Mississippi he was more than a

president—he was the prophet Moses, leading his people into the promised land. His story inevitably becomes a chronicle of the liberation movement of black Americans during the 1950s and 1960s. Martin Luther King was to some extent a mirror of this movement, with its successes and failures, hopes and disappointments, strength and weakness. He died at a time when, despite his efforts, the black movement was entering a phase of violent uprising and the counter-blows of white America were redoubling.

"You Are Just as Good as Anyone Else"

Martin Luther King was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. His father was then assistant pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

The family's roots lay in slavery. Martin's maternal grandfather was born in 1863, of slave parents but in the same year President Lincoln proclaimed the emancipation of black slaves. In 1894 he was appointed to the Ebenezer Baptist Church and, as a man who was not only religious-minded but also possessed a practical approach, succeeded in making it one of the most respectable and financially sound Negro churches in Atlanta. Martin's grandfather was highly respected by his parishioners and by the local black population generally.

Martin's father understood the importance of education early and spared neither effort nor money in bringing up his own children. Martin Luther King completed secondary school and graduated from Morehouse College, a higher educational institution for male blacks in Atlanta. He was a good student. His father intended him for the church, aware that black pastors had a better chance of a secure income, the respect of the community and elementary politeness from the whites. But Martin was not immediately attracted by the church. He dreamed briefly of becoming a doctor. Later, while at college, he became interested in the art of oratory and took first or second place in student competitions for political speaking. Eventually his father, by then a prominent churchman and an active figure in the civil-rights movement, and the influence of his theology professors triumphed in Martin's choice of career.

After graduating from Morehouse College, Martin Luther King continued his education in the northern United States—at Crozer Theological Seminary near Chester, Pennsylvania, where he gained a bachelor of theology degree, and at Boston University where, in 1955, he was awarded a doctorate of philosophy. In the North, where a black could enter university, Martin met another temporary fugitive from the South: Coretta Scott, a black student at the conservatory. Her dream was to become a singer, but Coretta Scott and Martin Luther King met and fell in love.

Externally life was proceeding smoothly and even fortunately

for this powerfully-built young man upon whom, indeed, fate had smiled. He had never known want, was always tastefully dressed, had learned excellent manners and acquired a fine education. His father did everything to advance his son. King the elder was proud of him and made the young theological scholar his assistant with the intention of preserving the Ebenezer Baptist Church a "family institution." The King family belonged to the black petty bourgeoisie of Atlanta.

Yes, life was good, if ... If you did not think, if you hid yourself away in the warm, comfortable domestic shell, if, at the price of your personal dignity, you learned to live in the alien, hostile world of the whites, which attacked you at every step. Martin's father wanted to establish his son in the world, but what did that mean? The simple answer inevitably came to this: for a black, especially a black living in the southern states of the US, it meant establishing oneself among second-class people or, in the conventional expression, among second-class citizens. Even the degree of doctor of philosophy did not guarantee its holder elementary human rights if he was a black southerner. King knew that long before he defended his academic thesis.

The school of life begins at a very early age and for a black child it is a special school. Martin received his first lesson at the age of five, when he lost the friendship of two white boys, the sons of a neighbouring grocer. The boys had been his playmates, but suddenly they began to avoid him. He would run to the grocer's house and call his friends out to play, but their parents—without open hostility, it may be noted—would reply that the boys were not home or that they were too busy to play. Thus they spared the black lad in their own way—and spared themselves, too, by shifting the burden of explanations on to his parents. Perplexed, he brought his incomprehension to his mother, in whose lap he learned for the first time about slavery, the civil war between the North and the South, the fact that he had been born black and his friends white and the immense and terrible consequences that flowed from this. What else could his mother do? What would have been the point of delaying the revelation, when the truth was already lying in wait and could break over the boy's head at any moment from the lips of pitiless strangers?

She told Martin: "You are just as good as anyone else." This was true, but that did not change the facts of life. They made themselves felt more and more keenly.

While a student at Morehouse College, Martin earned money during his summer holidays at a mattress factory, where he

discovered that the white students he worked with were paid more than blacks for the same job.

In Chester and Boston King felt freer. The blanket of segregation was less stifling and relations with white students were usually calm, if not cordial. Nevertheless, in the North, too, the eternal black wariness was required and a black had to tread cautiously in order to avoid humiliating situations.

Nevertheless, King felt that blacks breathed more freely in the North and as the end of his studies approached he was tempted to remain. He was offered the pastorship of two Negro churches, but whatever the South was, it was still home, and to the attachment to his place of birth a feeling of duty had now been added. A flight to safety in the North smacked of treachery. He chose the South and, after delivering a test sermon, was appointed pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. After gaining the degree of doctor of philosophy in systematic theology, King moved there with his wife in June 1955. Soon, however, an event took place that changed his life.

Rosa Parks, a black seamstress at one of Montgomery's department stores, boarded a municipal bus after work on December 1, 1955. The evening rush-hour had begun and the bus was packed. The white bus-driver ordered Rosa Parks and three other black passengers to give up their seats to whites. Three, following the usual practice, obeyed. But Rosa Parks did not rise: she was exhausted by a hard day. She was dragged off the bus by force and arrested for breaching the peace.

Keeping the peace, in Montgomery as everywhere else in the South, meant that while the cents of black bus passengers were not scorned, they had to enter the bus by the front door, pay the driver and then alight again. Then, if the bus had not moved off—and sometimes even that happened—blacks would re-enter the bus at the rear, taking empty seats there. But those seats, too, had to be given up if there were not enough places for whites.

Approximately 50,000 blacks lived in Montgomery: one in three of the population and 70 per cent of the municipal bus service's passengers. The arrest of Rosa Parks was the last straw. The idea of a one-day bus boycott was conceived.

The young Martin Luther King offered his church as a meeting-place for the organisers of the boycott. The boycott was fixed for December 5. Its organisers hoped for at least 60 per cent support from the black population, but a not very intelligent chief of police who called upon blacks to ignore the boycott and promised to back those who did, played into the organisers' hands. On December 5 each bus was followed by a police

motorcycle. Even compliant blacks were unwilling to court possible danger when they saw these escorts. To the surprise of the organisers, the boycott was almost 100 per cent successful.

At 6 a.m. King, who had slept little from excitement, was drinking coffee in his kitchen. "Come here quickly!" Coretta called to him. The bus-stop under their window was deserted. A bus went by, completely empty, although at that early hour it would usually have been filled with black maid-servants, cooks and cleaning women on their way to work for the white mistresses of Montgomery. Another bus passed—empty, quite empty. The next bus contained two—white—passengers. The front and the rear seats were all free for them. They could even have danced in this empty bus.

On the same morning Rosa Parks was found guilty and fined 14 dollars. Later that day King was elected head of the boycott committee and a boycott was declared until victory was gained, although it must be admitted that not everyone believed in it.

The election of Martin Luther King to a leading position on the committee was due to the fact that, as a newcomer to Montgomery, he did not have opponents among either the representatives of local authorities or rival black groups. A person was needed who was acceptable to everyone—and King was that person. He received unanimous support. King, who had not sought the leadership, was surprised. Everything had happened rapidly and, for the most part, by chance.

"We have been given a Moses!" said E. D. Nixon, a Montgomery black, much later. It was to Nixon that the idea of the boycott belonged. The blacks had, indeed, been given more than they had expected. But on that day they still did not know that and the surprised leader of the boycott, who had been accustomed to spend fifteen hours preparing his sermons, was forced hastily to write his first political speech in twenty minutes in order not to be late for a meeting at an unfamiliar church on Holt Street. The crowded church was in an uproar; so were the 4,000 blacks on the street. The unusually large audience pleased and frightened him, but his voice was firm, measured and loud.

"There comes a time," he said, "when people get tired. We are here this evening to say to those who have mistreated us so long that we are tired—tired of being segregated and humiliated, tired of being kicked about by the brutal feet of oppression! We have no alternative but to protest. For many years, we have shown amazing patience. We have sometimes given our white brothers the feeling that we liked the way we were being treated. But we've come here tonight to be saved from that patience."

The boycott continued 381 days and went into history, for now it is considered to have marked the beginning of active struggle for equality.

The blacks were not badly organised and, in general, demonstrated solidarity. Black taxi-owners took participants in the boycott to work and back at the equivalent of bus fares. Money sent to the boycott fund was used to purchase twenty vehicles for the same purpose. But the majority were compelled to rise very early and cover on foot the long miles that separated black neighbourhoods from white. For this reason the boycott became known as the Walk For Freedom.

Now King was known in the city and with his new fame came the first respect of some and the first hatred of others. He discovered that hatred makes itself felt more strongly than love; at any rate, it uses more effective means of expressing itself. On January 30, during the second month of the boycott, racists threw a bomb at his house—the first of many. It exploded on the porch. By a miracle Coretta and King's small daughter were not hurt. King was at a meeting.

King was young and inexperienced. The aim he was striving for was modest: the right to use public transport on the same terms as whites. It was also disinterested, for the young pastor owned a car and his church was close to his home. Now he found that, even to achieve equal rights on the buses, one had to be prepared to pay not only with one's own life but with the lives of those close to one. He had, after all, been elected to nothing more than the leader of the boycott committee, only to find himself the principal target of the racists.

The bus boycott inescapably raised the question of the path King would follow. Later he was not ashamed to admit that he felt fear at that time.

By the time the first bomb was thrown on to his porch, King's doubts were behind him. W.A. ("Tacky") Gayle, the mayor of Montgomery, who came to the scene of the crime with the police, was surrounded by a large crowd of furious blacks ready to lynch him for his unambiguous indulgence for the racists. Rushing home, King saw that an eruption was imminent. He mounted his ruined porch and persuaded the rebellious blacks to disperse.

"Don't get panicky... We are not advocating violence... We must love our white brothers. If I am stopped, this movement will not stop. What we are doing is just..."

But the blacks of Montgomery were victorious.

By a US Supreme Court decision of December 21, 1956, they were given the right to sit where they wished in buses.

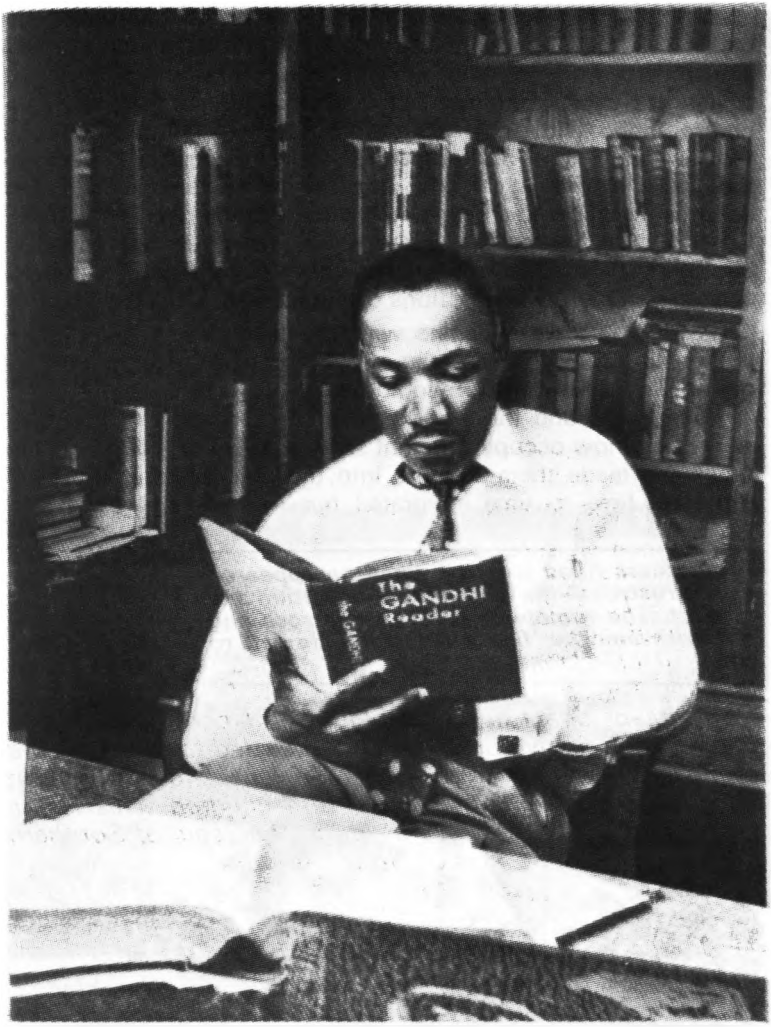
The racists of the southern states had experienced King's stubbornness for the first time. For the young pastor a new life had begun: that of a struggler. He learned to do without sufficient sleep and to see his family only at irregular intervals. He had become a national figure and travelled widely within the United States, delivering political speeches, collecting desperately needed money and striving to achieve solidarity and gain sympathy. His was the honourable and dangerous right of standing in the front rank of the freedom marches.

Since the boycott King had understood the power of large organised groups. Gradually he elaborated the tactics of non-violent, mass "direct action", adapting to the realities of the southern states the methods of Mahatma Gandhi, who had used the weapon of civil disobedience in the struggle against the British colonialists. Like Gandhi, King was inspired by the ideas of the famous 19th-century American poet and philosopher Henry Thoreau, who defended the right of citizens to resist unjust laws and acts by the government in his work *Civil Disobedience*.

Why non-violence? King explained on more than one occasion why he had chosen this method. In an article for the magazine *Look* which appeared after his murder, he wrote: *"Non-violence was a creative doctrine in the South because it checkmated the rabid segregationists who were thirsting for an opportunity to physically crush Negroes. Non-violent direct action enabled the Negroes to take to the streets in active protest, but it muzzled the guns of the oppressor because even he could not shoot down in daylight unarmed men, women and children. This is the reason there was less loss of life in ten years of Southern protest than in ten days of Northern riots."*

Non-violence, according to King, did not mean non-resistance to evil. *"To cooperate passively with an unjust system makes the oppressed as evil as the oppressor,"* he stressed.

King wrote of the early years of his struggle: *"Some called for a colossal bloodbath to cleanse the nation's ills. To support their advocacy of violence and its incitement, they pointed to an historical tradition reaching back from Spartacus in Rome to the American Civil War. But the Negro in the South in 1955, assessing the power of the forces arrayed against him, could not perceive the slightest prospect of victory in this approach. He was unarmed, unorganised, untrained, disunited and, most important, psychologically and morally unprepared for the deliberate spilling of blood. Although his desperation had prepared*



King elaborated the tactics of non-violent, mass "direct action", adapting the methods of Mahatma Gandhi to the realities of the US Southern states.

him with the courage to die for freedom if necessary, he was not willing to commit himself to racial suicide with no prospect of victory."

King saw his path as lying in mobilisation of the masses. He realised that segregation could not be overturned by court decisions; instead, he assaulted it with mass marches, boycotts and sit-ins. He chose the course of open, direct—but non-violent—confrontation with the racists, consciously creating crises and tension in the racist South. He called tension "creative" because the blacks, by dramatically demonstrating their demands and their determination, could create a new climate in inter-racial relations. Crises were a means of moving towards negotiations aimed at abolishing the unjust laws and practices of segregation, negotiations reinforced by the actions of the masses.

A journey always begins with the first step. When Martin Luther King took the first step of his journey in Montgomery he did not know how long it would be.

Rosa Parks and the 50,000 other black citizens of Montgomery could now occupy the front seats in buses, although hostile stares still made them squeeze into their old seats at the back and from time to time integrated buses were fired on in the

A quietness filled the hall when he appeared on the rostrum—the quietness of attention and respect. The rumble of his baritone rose and fell with emotion like a bell, loud, for all to hear.

evenings. But "Whites Only" notices continued to hang at the entrances to restaurants, cafes, motels and parks.

When I first visited the South in December 1961, five years after the famous boycott, I saw a notice in the Elite Cafe in Montgomery announcing that the owners reserved the right to refuse to serve any customer they chose. "Any customer" meant any black.

During this trip I made the indirect acquaintance of Martin Luther King. I also became directly acquainted with the customs of the American South.

The Crosses on the Lawn

At that time I was still a complete novice in America, having spent no more than six weeks in New York. I was then living at the corner of 87th Street and Park Avenue. The edge of Harlem was not far away, beginning in the Hundreds. Harlem was next door, but it lived separately and at first I was struck by the merciless self-criticism of Americans, who called it by the sinister and hopeless name "ghetto." There were no walls around Harlem, no barbed wire, no guard dogs. Physically it merged with the rest of Manhattan, but people nevertheless usually talked of it as a ghetto.

During those rainy days I would plunge into the dreary, wet maw of the underground on the corner of 86th Street and Lexington Avenue on my way downtown. The carriages were jammed with the inhabitants of Harlem, who had boarded the train in the Hundreds. As a stranger in town I felt an emotional kinship with these people: they were obviously strangers here, too. But I also felt something else: an absence of mutuality, a psychological barrier that had formed between us. For them I was a white—nothing more.

As a correspondent I naturally understood that black affairs would be among the topics I should have to cover. A friend of mine, who has arrived in America for a brief time, told me at that time: "We write that this is bad and that is bad about black life. But I've seen blacks who drive Cadillacs..."

What, then, was the position of blacks? Were they being lynched or were they driving Cadillacs? At the end of December 1961, my colleague and I travelled to the South to make a Christmas report on the position of black Americans.

... The Washington train was approaching Chattanooga, a city on the border of Tennessee and Georgia. A chilly, overcast dawn was breaking. The black attendant roused us at 7 a.m. and we stepped out, shivering, on to the rear platform of our carriage. The platform was open. The white conductor, who had boarded the train shortly before, asked our attendant about the weather in Washington. The latter answered courteously and monosyllabically: "Yes, sir, no, sir..."

He belonged to the old school of black railway attendants trade union. The previous evening he had played the role of a cheeky fellow, half servant, half jester, aware that the gentlemen were not averse to banter providing that the banterer kept his distance. This was not his true nature: he played this rather old-fashioned role, knowing it to be the image of the black the whites with whom he came into contact wanted.

This morning, however, he stood sombre and polite before the conductor. His manner had been changed not by the sobering greyness of the dawn, but by the fact that our train was now running through the South.

In the early pre-Christmas morning the square in front of the railway station was dreary and almost deserted. But the Hertz office in the station was full of life and the girl on duty merely checked our driving licenses and filled in a form before presenting us with the key of a Chevrolet. We had been granted freedom of action in this unfamiliar city and we drove through its empty streets.

Christmas eve came early and rapidly in Chattanooga. After dinner in the restaurant of the Drake Motel, where the bourgeois citizens of Chattanooga, all unimpeachably white, sat soberly, quietly and dully, we drove off in search of the other, black Chattanooga.

There was not a soul to be seen in the main shopping district, on Broad and Market Streets. Garlands of multi-coloured lamps shone with a cold beauty and we could see white American five-pointed stars and red Christmas bells. In the illuminated windows of closed shops goods lay in abundance. The broad expanses of shopping centres and supermarkets had been removed to the cheaper land of the suburbs. Here and there along the main road, under awnings or exposed to the air, hundreds of cars were displayed for sale. They looked orphaned, since there was no one

on the pavement to admire them, and although second-hand, they still gleamed seductively in the lights.

And then we drove into another Chattanooga where we saw poor wooden houses with small porches. In every hut, in the little windows at the back of the porches, we could see small green wreaths behind red lamps and electric candles glorifying Christ. They winked sadly and meekly, casting a pale light on to the dark street. For some reason it seemed to me that these were just like the secret lamps of the persecuted early Christians.

There were no signs, but it was clear that we had driven into black Chattanooga.

We stopped and got out to walk. The Christmas lamps gleamed unpretentiously. Passers-by were few. We could feel that white people did not come here, especially in the evening, when darkness physically reinforced the isolation of the two races. We were the only whites in this black Chattanooga.

People with dark faces hurried past. To the understandable caution aroused by an encounter with a stranger the barriers of a race which had long since learned to put on a mask before another race rather than to confess were added. These black people hurrying past seemed to warn us that our attempts to come to know the South would never be completely successful, because the soul of the black American was closed to whites and without knowing this soul how could one know the South?

It seemed that three hundred years of history, beginning in 1619 when the first shipload of African slaves arrived in the American South, were making their claim on us. We were conscious of the distrust and the incomprehension and the inquiry in the eyes of the Chattanooga blacks we encountered on the street. They saw everything in terms of this accursed, stale division into blacks and whites, Americans and Afro-Americans, and I shall scarcely be in error if I say that, even during a fleeting meeting on the street, in a bar, in an office or at a cinema, almost every black American reacts to a white American, a white stranger, with an unconscious flash of distrust. The converse is also true. This field of racial tension, which is usually hidden, is so strong in the United States that even a foreigner cannot but feel it.

There was something pastoral in the quiet red hills of Georgia, the concrete roads that ran through the December forests and the cardboard Christmas stars and bells in the streets of the cosy towns, which hid their quiescent ghettoes in out-of-the-way corners.

In Rome, Georgia, a small town of 32,000 people, we found in

the central square a monument depicting a wolf being suckled by Romulus and Remus. The monument, which bore the words "Roma Novae—Roma Aeterna", was presented to the town by Benito Mussolini in 1929. The town stands on seven hills, a fact to which it no doubt owes its name. Another, supplementary hill had evidently been found for black Romans—they lived like outcasts.

At the Chamber of Commerce, to which we hurried next morning when the holiday ended and citizens returned to normal life under the motto "business as usual," we met Mr Collins, the chamber's head, who told us that 820 of Rome's businessmen belonged to the chamber. However, not one of them was black. His explanation for this was disarming: there were simply no blacks who had their own business.

La Grange lies 94 miles to the south of Rome. The further south one travels, the more indisputable segregation becomes and in La Grange, population 26,000, blacks were separated from whites in schools, hospitals, at the bus station and in the service sphere. Only shops were available to blacks and whites on an equal basis, for money does not smell.

We were standing by the doors of the bus station when a Greyhound express drew up—a comfortable giant on whose silver sides a greyhound was depicted. Whites emerged first, followed by blacks, who had travelled at the back. An elderly black woman climbed down from the bus and walked towards the main entrance of the station. Glancing inside, she stepped back—that was the section for whites. She had found her bearings now and the door intended for her, which bore the sign "Coloureds Only." The section for whites was three or four times larger than that for blacks and was cleaner, more comfortable and brighter, with an imposing entrance. Three soldiers and an officer sat in the black section: US citizens on military service. The state had enlisted them in the army and entrusted them with the defence of its interests, but it could not protect their dignity in the bus station at La Grange. In Rome we were told that relations between whites and "coloureds" were normal. Why? Because "coloureds" constituted only 15 per cent of the population and preferred to keep quiet. Mr Crowe, the editor of the local newspaper in La Grange, explained that he had to deal with segregation issues seriously only when "freedom riders" appeared in town. ("Freedom riders" were then struggling against segregation on buses.) Mr Crowe, moreover, considered himself more liberal than the "typical Southerner."

We drove for a week along the roads and through the towns of Georgia and Alabama and before reaching Montgomery, the last

city on our journey, we stopped in the tiny town of Tuskegee, Alabama.

We drove into Tuskegee at night and at first we were unable to locate that Main or Broad Street, lit up even at night, which is essential to even the smallest American town. In the morning, however, everything became clear and we found both Main Street and the town square with its garden, in which a bronze confederate soldier stood four-square upon a pedestal.

The history of the civil war in the United States leaves no room for ambiguities: the Northerners beat the Southerners and emancipated the blacks from slavery. Nevertheless, history to the contrary, the bronze soldier stood undefeated and two descendants of the freed slaves cut the grass at his feet. A group of blacks basked in the sun, leaning against the wall of a food store marked "Coloureds Only." In the empty, shadowy court-house on the central square our eyes strayed over familiar notices indicating quite clearly where the place of the whites was and where that of "coloureds." Only the sheriff's door was without these notices: at that time a black could not become a sheriff in Tuskegee.

The ground floor of a small house on the edge of the square was occupied by the editorial offices of the *Tuskegee News.* At the reception desk, which was covered with newspapers, sat a plump, elderly woman. For a quarter of a century she and her husband have owned the *Tuskegee News,* a newspaper with a circulation of 1,500.

The woman's name was Mrs Fisher. She combined the appearance of a matron and housewife with the garrulousness of an American woman who takes up so-called public work for lack of other occupation. She spoke with the frankness of a person who knows that his convictions are shared by those around him.

"Yes, there are 1,700 people in Tuskegee. Five or six coloureds to every white. We Southerners don't like the blacks as a race. Of course, some of them we like—you meet them on the street or in a shop. But heaven forbid you should invite them to your home! There are more of them than there are of us, but we run the town and the county. Yes, the supreme court allowed them to register as voters, but just imagine what would have happened if they had all suddenly taken it into their heads to vote! It would have been terrible! We would have had blacks running the town. And they've no education. Of course, we couldn't let that happen. It wasn't easy to find a solution, but we found one all the same—after all, our future depended on it. We changed the borders of the town and the blacks disappeared from the electoral rolls. They

were really mad! They boycotted the newspaper and the shops. But everything has been all right so far, thank heaven..."

I remembered Mrs Fisher by the contrast she formed with a close neighbour of the *Tuskegee News*. The neighbour was the Tuskegee Institute, renowned as one of the largest, oldest and most respected black institutions of higher education in the United States.

At the institute we found Mr Trout, the public-relation officer, who drove us to Dr L. H. Foster, president of the Tuskegee Institute.

Dr Foster, a venerable, elderly black, received us in his sombre, well-furnished study with its carpets and leather armchairs. The college president was calm and measured in manner; he referred to Mrs Fisher with gentle irony as a "philosopher". He gave the impression of being a highly educated, profoundly reflective man, a man of wide and deep understanding. Perhaps this universal knowledge contained the secret of both the strength and the vulnerability of his wisdom, which knew how strong old roots are and was therefore disinclined to believe in radical actions and swift changes. He had, incidentally, noted a trend towards improvement and assured us that everything would be fine if this trend did not meet with opposition.

He was ashamed of the paradoxes of Tuskegee. His colleague, Dr Kennedy, could not drink a cup of coffee in a rundown cafe. Yet Dr Kennedy, a black, was the head of the black veterans' hospital beside the institute. The 2,000-bed hospital belonged to the federal Veterans' Agency and had an annual budget of 9 million dollars; it was the largest contributor to the finances of the county in which Tuskegee is located.

But Dr Kennedy had to "know his place" in Tuskegee, his humiliating position, and it could scarcely have been a consolation to him that this position was side by side with Dr Foster and dozens of other black doctors of philosophy and bachelors of arts. Dr Foster was responsible for more than 2,000 students, many of whom would leave Tuskegee with teaching degrees. Yet he had to live in the shadow of a semi-literate sheriff and of Mrs Fisher, who found nothing strange in declaring to two unknown foreigners her hatred for blacks "as a race."

But it is time to conclude this description of our trip to the South, which was virtually at an end when we arrived in Montgomery. From there we flew in a Delta Airlines plane to New York. All the seats in the aircraft were occupied except one—beside the sole black passenger. We left for New York on December 30. The plane was packed with New Year travellers. As I sat in the

aeroplane, looking at the empty seat beside the black passenger, I was able to appreciate the diplomatic qualities and even self-sacrifice of the airline. Prevented from segregating air transport between segregated Montgomery and desegregated New York, it had been able, by failing to find a "seatmate" for the black passenger, to avoid an unpleasant racial conflict in the air at the cost of a lost seat.

While the aeroplane flew over Alabama I jotted down my final impressions.

Today I regret that there are almost no impressions of Montgomery among my notes, the starting point of Martin Luther King's journey. He knew all thirteen Southern states like his own five fingers, after crossing and recrossing them during his courageous "freedom rides". He learned what the weight of a club on one's back felt like, the loathsome experience of others spitting in one's face. His black pastor's suit was ripped more than once by a policeman's grasp, he knew the piercing cold of a cell's cement floor and what the blue southern sky looked like through the bars of a cell window. He had three children and every night brought danger to his home in Atlanta, where he had moved to preach together with his father at the Ebenezer Baptist Church and where he had established the headquarters of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The SCLC already had dozens of branches and thousands of activists in the towns and cities of the South and the crosses of the Ku Klux Klan had blazed more than once on the lawn in front of his house. King, the eternal wanderer, would telephone home from far away to learn if his wife and children were still alive and well.

As we came to know the psychology of white Southerners, we realised how truly terrible this force was—the force of habit of millions of people who have inherited the commandment of racism from their fathers and grandfathers. King knew not only this problem but also that of another psychology. He knew how difficult it was to squeeze the slave's servility, the slave's inferiority complex, inherited from fathers and grandfathers, out of himself, out of those close to him and out of millions of dark-skinned people.

This was the time of the famous "freedom rides," guerrilla raids on the ramified system of segregation by the young heroes of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Groups of young people would appear at bus or railway stations or in shops, cafes or motels and sit or lie down on the floor. Sit-ins and lie-ins disrupted the established course of life and prevented business. Police seized them and they were dragged off to local lock-ups,

where they were sometimes savagely beaten. White students from the North were the object of particular fury, for the racists regarded them as traitors. King came to the aid of the students with his "direct mass action."

This had also happened in Albany. Students were arrested and a day later hundreds of Albany blacks came out to the streets to demonstrate in protest. A further 267 people were arrested.

On December 15 King flew to Albany from Atlanta. He was awaited as people await justice, as they await a miracle-worker. (Back in the days of the Montgomery boycott, when King had become famous and popular, he once remarked ironically: *"A man who hits the peak at twenty-seven has a tough job ahead. People will be expecting me to pull rabbits out of a hat for the rest of my life."* The local Baptist church was not large enough to hold the 1,500 people who had gathered and many stood outside in the drizzle. King's aeroplane was delayed by the bad weather and people waited five hours for him in the rain. His name had, indeed, a special magnetism.

King declared in a short speech that they could not slow down their movement. They could not permit themselves to subscribe to the doctrine of gradualism. Gradualism led to do-nothingism and that meant preserving the present position. Blacks demanded all their rights and they demanded them now! Those present at the meeting began by demanding that the people arrested be freed by 10 a.m. on December 16.

But King's magnetism had no effect on Albany's police chief, Laurie Pritchett.

On December 16 about 600 blacks marched on City Hall, led by King and an Albany black, Dr Anderson.

Three blocks from City Hall the demonstrators found the road blocked by Laurie Pritchett. The barricade was manned by policemen, while from the roof of a nearby hotel events were watched by national guardsmen. Laurie Pritchett approached King and demanded his official permit for the march. No permit for the march had been issued. Laurie Pritchett ordered the marchers to disperse, using a megaphone. The marchers refused. They were then surrounded and taken to a lane adjoining the prison.

They had demonstrated peacefully, without violence, and Laurie Pritchett had arrested them without violence. More than 700 blacks were locked up in the local jails. King and Anderson found themselves in the same cell.

King refused to post bond and go free. He wanted the demonstration to continue, for a thousand people at least to be

arrested and for students to make a Christmas pilgrimage to Albany, hitting the businessmen of Albany in their pockets by wrecking the Christmas shopping season, the most profitable in the year. But a section of the Albany blacks were afraid of these "extremes" and the vengeance of the whites. "King and the others will go away," said one of the local leaders, "but we have to live here."

Before Christmas a two-month "truce" was concluded. Riding the wave of the Albany events, King called upon President John Kennedy to issue a second proclamation on the emancipation of the blacks—almost 100 years after the first, signed by Abraham Lincoln. He reminded the president of his pledge before the election to end segregation in housing with "a stroke of the pen" and of other promises made in pre-election speeches. But government support was purely symbolic. Robert Kennedy, the president's brother and the attorney-general at the time, limited himself to a telephone call to the mayor of Albany in which he tried to pursuade him to observe federal rules on inter-state passenger transport, which prohibited discrimination at stations and terminals.

With intervals the Albany campaign continued for many months, concluding in the summer of 1962. King was defeated in this campaign, which was second in terms of scale to the Montgomery bus boycott. His critics declared non-violence dead. But King did not lose heart.

"Human beings with all their faults and strengths constitute the mechanism of a social movement," he wrote later. *"They must make mistakes and learn from them, make more mistakes and learn anew. They must taste defeat as well as success, and discover how to live with each. Time and action are the teachers."*

King tasted defeat and was ready to learn from his mistakes and to talk of revolution. He was stubborn, ferociously stubborn in the American style, although he knew that the more stubborn he became the greater was the possibility that sooner or later accounts would be settled with him.

The Truth Cast Down Will Always Rise Up Again

Before embarking on the Birmingham chapter of this chronicle, I wish to quote two references.

The first is taken from the *Columbia Encyclopedia.*

"Birmingham. Industrial city (pop. 340,887), the leading iron and steel center in the South. Iron, coal, limestone, and other materials from the area supply the city's great iron and steel plants and its metal working factories. Textile products, chemicals and cement are also made. Founded in 1871, Birmingham grew swiftly. Its rapid industrial development resulted from the advantages of its natural resources and the expansion of the railroads... On nearby Red Mt. is a huge iron statue of Vulcan overlooking the city. Birmingham is the seat of Howard College (Baptist; coeducational; 1841) and Miles College (Methodist Episcopal; coeducational; 1907). The Univ. of Alabama has its medical college and dental school here. Birmingham-Southern College (Methodist; coeducational) was formed in 1918 by the merger of Southern Univ. and Birmingham College. The Birmingham Conservatory of Music became a part of the college in 1953..."

This brief reference does not mention that, of Birmingham's 340,887 residents, 135,332—that is, two-fifths—are black. We shall look at Birmingham in 1963 through the eyes of an Afro-American.

Our second reference comes from King's book *Why We Can't Wait.*

"If you had visited Birmingham before the third of April in the one-hundredth-anniversary year of the Negros' emancipation, you might have come to a startling conclusion. You might have concluded that here was a city which had been trapped for decades in a Rip Van Winkle slumber; a city whose fathers had apparently never heard of Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, the Bill of Rights, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments or the 1954 decision of the United States Supreme Court outlawing segregation in the public schools.

"If your powers of imagination were great enough to enable you to place yourself in the position of a Negro baby born and

brought up to physical maturity in Birmingham, you would have pictured your life in the following manner:

"You would be born in a jim-crow hospital to parents who probably lived in a ghetto. You would attend a jim-crow school.

"You would spend your childhood playing mainly in the streets because the 'coloured' parks were abysmally inadequate. When a federal court order banned park segregation, you would find that Birmingham closed down its parks and gave up its baseball team rather than integrate them...

"...If your family attended church, you would go to a Negro church. If you wanted to visit a church attended by white people, you would not be welcome. For although your white fellow citizens would insist that they were Christians, they practised segregation as rigidly in the house of God as they did in the theatre.

"If you wanted a job in this city—one of the greatest iron- and steel-producing centers in the nation—you had better settle on doing menial work as a porter or laborer. If you were fortunate enough to get a job, you could expect that promotions to a better status or more pay would come, not to you, but to a white employee regardless of your comparative talents. On your job, you would eat in a separate place and use a water fountain and lavatory labeled 'Colored' in conformity to city-wide ordinances... Of the 80,000 voters in Birmingham, prior to January, 1963, only 10,000 were Negroes. Your race, constituting two-fifths of the city's population, would make up one-eighth of its voting strength.

"You would be living in a city where brutality directed against Negroes was an unquestioned and unchallenged reality. One of the city commissioners, a member of the body that ruled municipal affairs, would be Eugene 'Bull' Connor, a racist who prided himself on knowing how to handle the Negro and keep him in his 'place'.

"As Commissioner of Public Safety, Bull Connor, entrenched for many years in a key position in the Birmingham power structure, displayed as much contempt for the rights of the Negro as he did defiance for the authority of the federal government.

"You would have found a general atmosphere of violence and brutality in Birmingham. Local racists have intimidated, mobbed and even killed Negroes with impunity. One of the more vivid and recent examples of the terror of Birmingham was the castration of a Negro man, whose mutilated body had then been abandoned on a lonely road. No Negro home was protected from bombings and burnings. From the year 1957 through January of 1963,

while Birmingham was still claiming that its Negroes were 'satisfied', seventeen unsolved bombings of Negro churches and homes of civil-rights leaders had occurred.

"In Connor's Birmingham, the silent password was fear. It was a fear not only on the part of the black oppressed, but also in the hearts of the white oppressors. Guilt was a part of their fear. There was also the dread of change, that all too prevalent fear which hounds those whose attitudes have been hardened by the long winter of reaction. Many were apprehensive of social ostracism. Certainly Birmingham had its white moderates who disapproved of Bull Connor's tactics. Certainly Birmingham had its decent white citizens who privately deplored the maltreatment of Negroes. But they remained publicly silent. It was a silence born of fear—fear of social, political and economic reprisals. The ultimate tragedy of Birmingham was not the brutality of the bad people, but the silence of the good people."

On this occasion, the goal did not seek out the man, as happened in Albany, where King, unprepared, tried without success to complete what had been begun by a student "freedom ride". In Birmingham King and his associates chose their goal—and what a goal! They took aim at the solar plexus of racism, dreaming enthusiastically of going on from victory in Birmingham to break the back of segregation throughout the country. For them "Bull" Connor was the personification of an enemy.

Behind him, looking out from the governor's mansion in Montgomery, stood the unimpressive but unyielding figure of the fanatic George Wallace. Wallace was a man who had already vowed to maintain segregation for ever and barred the doors of Alabama's universities to blacks with his own body before the eyes of the entire nation.

The stakes were high in the Birmingham campaign, the opposition was strong and the risks were great. After the failure in Albany, defeat in Birmingham would deal a fatal blow to "the apostle of non-violence".

Tactics were polished, people trained and money was collected. Of course, King was not working alone. There were always others around him. Raised above the others by his authority as a national leader, his ability to rouse people to action and his gift for speaking precisely, fierily, loftily and yet in the earthy language of his people, King gathered around himself devoted brothers-in-arms and able organisers. He was the first among equals and each of his fellows, occupied with his own affairs, did not dispute King's leadership, understanding how valuable King's magnetic force was to their movement. This force sprang from King's self-

sacrifice and self-denial, his ability to involve himself wholly in the cause and his habit of asking more of himself than of others.

The way was paved for King's appearance on the Birmingham stage by the actions of Pastor Fred Shuttlesworth, head of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, a group which merged with King's organisation.

King had learned a valuable lesson from his Albany failure: to ensure maximum impact, he had to concentrate his forces and aim them at a single target. In Birmingham the chosen target was the city's shopkeepers, specifically, its segregated lunch-counters.

Blacks were humiliated in the very place where their dollars were accepted, so desegregating lunch-counters also had a symbolic significance.

And so sit-ins began at lunch-counters. A parallel boycott of shops also commenced. Since 40 per cent of Birmingham's population was black, a mass boycott would mean a fall in the number of shoppers that would spell the difference, terrible to the shopkeeper, between profit and loss.

Finally, marches began, bringing open confrontation.

At training centres Southern Christian Leadership Conference volunteers learned the methods of non-violence and "direct action." Everyone signed a "Commitment Card" to the movement, pledging himself to observe its ten commandments, which combined religious vows with militant pledges. The first commandment was to "meditate daily on the teachings and life of Jesus." The fifth was to "sacrifice personal wishes in order that all men might be free," the seventh to "refrain from the violence of fist, tongue, or heart" and the tenth to "follow the directions of the captain on a demonstration."

"Fill up the jails!"—that slogan was fulfilled in Birmingham, too. The protesters were ready for prison, for the jailing of thousands of blacks—the more, the better.

And so the spring, summer and autumn of Birmingham 1963 began, rumbling like the first salvoes in the first general offensive against US racism.

April 3, the first day of confrontation, came and went almost unnoticed. Thirty volunteers penetrated Birmingham's shopping centre and, precisely according to schedule, entered Britt's Department Store, Woolworth's and Loveman's, where they dashed to the forbidden stools of the lunch-counters. They were arrested and sent to prison.

In the evening a meeting was held at a black church—the first of 65 mobilising meetings.

The days were filled with marches and arrests, the evenings

with meetings of solidarity and protest. Day followed day, march followed march, meeting followed meeting, as the unsure trying of the ropes by bell-ringers and the first timid, test peal are followed by the first, thundering strokes of a great bell.

Oh, those meetings in churches which replaced public halls, the dark faces gleaming in the shadows, the rumble of deep-voiced orator priests and the answering cries from the audience, encouraging themselves and the people on the stage—yes, yes, oh yes!

And the freedom songs, the soul of the freedom movement! They served a glorious cause, those songs, remade from the old songs of the slaves that blacks absorb with their mothers' milk. "We shall overcome ... we shall overcome some day..." the words of a favourite anthem rang out like a pledge.

During the first days the marches were small, but they gradually increased in strength. The boycott of shops succeeded: improvised check-points recorded only twenty or so black customers in the city's shopping district in the course of a day.

And the jails filled up.

The police dogs and police clubs made their first appearance on April 7, Palm Sunday, but in general "Bull" Connor conducted himself with rare restraint. His subordinates, too, avoided violence.

In ten days the police arrested 450 people. In general, the campaign was going according to plan, but the "constructive tension" King sought for was absent.

The day came when King was to lead the next march and thus deliver himself into the hands of the police. On the evening before he conferred with his friends and colleagues at the Gaston Motel. The movement's bail fund had been depleted following the hundreds of arrests and the city authorities, sensing this, were demanding immediate payment for the release of prisoners. King, by using his name and making personal appeals to sympathisers, could replenish the fund—but only while he was free. What would happen if he were arrested the following day? But what would be said of him if, having indirectly sent hundreds of people to prison, he himself shunned arrest by failing to appear at a march on the day announced? His prestige, capital no less important than the bail fund, was the prestige of the movement. After agonising hesitation and despite the persuasion of his friends, he decided to sacrifice expediency for principle. He must keep his word—to acquire the reputation of a deceiver was the greatest danger.

On April 12 King was the first to leave Zion Hill Church. There

His black pastor's suit was ripped more than once by a policeman's grasp, and he knew the piercing cold of a cell's cement floor.

were no more than 50 people on the march, but five prison vehicles, one hundred policemen and "Bull" Connor himself were

waiting for them. Wearing jeans and work-shirts, the clothes chosen as most appropriate for marches and prison, King approached the police line. An order to disperse was given, was ignored—and he found himself in a prison truck.

King spent eight days behind bars. He thought, of course, about his small children—two girls and two boys. He thought of his wife, again thrown into a state of anxiety—constant anxiety for her husband and children.

King burned with impatience. In thinking of his children, he thought of his own cause. He had been accused of haste. By whom? By white clergymen, colleagues who had, moreover, the reputation of supporting equal rights. The well-known preacher Billy Graham had publicly advised Reverend King "to put the brakes on a little bit". Eight Birmingham clergymen, moderates, who had even been emboldened to allow blacks into their churches, issued An Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense. Their common sense condemned the black movement as "unwise and untimely."

On April 16 King replied in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," a long letter since "what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?"

This appeal to his opponents was by no means mild and prayerful; King couched it in terms of furious criticism. Replying to reproaches, he wrote: *"We have waited for more than 340 years for our ... rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch-counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait'...*

"But when you have seen some vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to

colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: 'Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?'; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading 'white' and 'colored'; when your first name becomes 'nigger', your middle name becomes 'boy' (however old you are) and your last name becomes 'John', and your wife and mother are never given the respected title 'Mrs.'; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of 'nobodiness'—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait."

In this counter-attack King defended the right to disobey racist laws: *"There are two types of laws: just and injust... Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust."*

This apostle of non-violence was accused of extremism. In replying, he defended "creative extremism," excluding compliance with injustice and oppression.

The paradox—and it was a planned paradox, part and parcel of King's strategy—was that the success of non-violence was usually linked to violence from the other side, the violence of enemies, of racists. This broke down indifference, enabling a third, decisive force to enter the confrontation—the solidarity of the press, television, public opinion.

When he was released on bail after eight days in prison, King insisted on involving young people in the marches.

Now hundreds, not dozens, of triumphant demonstrators went to prison, singing songs of freedom.

Birmingham witnessed the unusual spectacle of busloads—school busloads—of children being taken, not to school, but to prison: there were not enough prison vehicles. Many headmasters ordered their pupils not to participate in marches, but the children simply left their classes.

More than 2,000 people were arrested in Birmingham during an anti-racist demonstration. The policemen's actions were distinguished by a special brutality.

On May 2 the police were exhausted to the utmost. In the course of a single day more than 1,000 people, mostly young, were arrested and the police had to drag this human mass, unresisting but uncompliant, into vans and buses.

An infuriated "Bull" Connor tore off his mask.

On May 3 a march was savagely dispersed and on May 4 historic photographs appeared in the American press.

Two maddened policemen swung their clubs at an elderly black woman lying on the asphalt. Stunned, black-skinned spectators gathered on the pavement while powerful young men stood in the road, their necks shaven, police badges on the breast pockets of ironed shirts, stainless-steel handcuffs on wide belts and their right hands wound around with leashes at the end of which broad-chested German shepherd-dogs strained with impatience. Among these young men, his back to the camera, a black man in a straw hat stood, arms spread out and legs apart as if performing a very difficult, very risky and by no means voluntary dance, his left trouser-leg torn from top to bottom exposing the tensed muscles of his leg and beside him, jaws open to show its white fangs, a dog on a leash reared on its hind legs, eager for partners in this dance, while another shepherd-dog was busy on the other side with the right trouser-leg and the right buttock.

Three people stood by a wall as if condemned, shot with streams of water from a fire-hose. The black woman on the left seemed to want to push herself into the wall, to immure herself—in this there would be salvation—while on the right a young man was protecting his face with his hand. The third person had inclined his head prayerfully beneath the merciless volleys of water and his wet clothes clung in sculptural folds to his skin.

In our age more credence is given to the testimony of the cine-camera and the photographic lense than to a cry from the heart, especially since not every cry will be heard and not every heart can express itself. Reporters helped the black citizens of Birmingham. The brutal immediacy of their photographs shook America. They answered those who counselled against haste better than King could.

Thus "creative tension" was created.

The blacks did not retreat. The next day thousands came on to the street, knowing that the "non-violence" of the police was over and that they would again be met by dogs and clubs. But this was, as King rightly said, "our finest hour". It was during this hour that the Birmingham bell rang out its message of alarm.

The Birmingham police and their chief became frenzied. Savage reprisals taken against peaceful people, against ado-

lescents and children spilled out of Alabama day after day on to the television screens and into the newspapers of the United States and the entire world.

Americans could only justify themselves by statements that this was the deep South, which lived according to savage rules rejected by the civilised North. The world was uninterested in such niceties: it was horrified by the face of racist America on display in Birmingham.

During those culminating days more than 2,500 blacks were thrown into prison. "Fill the jails!"—and the jails of Birmingham were so jammed that the police ceased making mass arrests.

President Kennedy sent Burke Marshall, chief civil-rights assistant of the Attorney-General, to Birmingham giving him the task of organising talks between the black leaders and white big businessmen, the real masters of Birmingham.

Meanwhile secret talks were conducted in Birmingham between the black leaders and the white Senior Citizens Committee in parallel with the marches. The blacks put forward four demands: 1) desegregation of snack-bars, public conveniences, fitting rooms and drinking fountains in shops; 2) non-discriminatory promotion and the hire of blacks by Birmingham's shops and industrial enterprises; 3) the dropping of charges against imprisoned demonstrators; 4) establishment of an inter-racial committee to draw up a timetable for desegregation in other areas of Birmingham's life.

But police repression did not cease. The campaign organisers could no longer control the anger of the blacks and the non-violent units were joined in the struggle by unorganised blacks, who had lost faith in non-violence and used the counter-arguments of bricks and empty bottles against the police. The savagery intensified.

The relentless boycott of segregated trading premises continued, groups of blacks picketing the doors of shops. The city was, in any case, not in a buying mood: even white citizens preferred to avoid the epicentre of racial disorder, the clubs and dogs of the police and the embittered blacks. The repression dramatised the struggle, but in practical terms boycott participants were, perhaps, helped most of all by the dollar. Shopkeepers suffered heavy losses. This circumstance compelled businessmen—the "city fathers"—to treat their talks with the blacks more seriously. On May 10 the two sides came to a four-point agreement. Point 1: desegregation within three months. Point 2: improvement within two months. Point 3: a promise of official help in freeing those who had been imprisoned. Point 4:

establishment within two weeks of a body for inter-racial co-operation.

Victory! Or was it?

Late in the evening of Saturday, May 11, two bombs were thrown from a car at the home of Alfred Daniel King, a Birmingham clergyman and Martin Luther King's younger brother. The bombs demolished the façade, but the pastor, his wife and five children remained unhurt. A few minutes later another bomb, believed to have been thrown from the same mysterious car (the criminals were never caught), exploded at the Gaston Motel. It was aimed at Room No. 30, in which King and Abernathy were living, but by chance—it was a lucky Saturday night for the King brothers!—both men were with their families in Atlanta.

The bombs exploded on a Saturday evening, when the streets of the black neighbourhoods were filled with people and the bars were still open. Police sent to the Gaston Motel and the home of A. D. King were met by a hail of bricks.

The trigger-happy highway patrolmen drove up. Blows from gun butts and fists were scattered indiscriminately. After dispersing the blacks who had gathered near the motel, the patrolmen moved along the streets, settling accounts with every black they met. The shops of white grocers had already been set ablaze in response and the white firemen fighting the flames were met with bricks and bottles. "Order" was re-established only at 4 o'clock the following morning. Fifty injured men and women were in hospital.

That was how the night after the day of victory passed.

This time President Kennedy himself was forced to intervene in the critical situation. On the evening of May 12 he ordered dispatch of 3,000 regular troops at bases in the Birmingham area and announced that, if necessary, he would mobilise the Alabama national guard, thus placing it under his command. Regular detachments were airlifted into the Birmingham area.

On May 23 the Alabama supreme court dismissed Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor. In this sense victory was indisputable.

However, as the blacks' struggle intensified it became increasingly difficult for President Kennedy to pursue his half-hearted policy. Considerations of "civil peace" in the country, its prestige abroad and, finally, the constitutional rights of Americans demanded a solution to the problem of desegregation. By declining to fulfil his pre-election promises the president was increasingly disillusioning blacks and liberal white Americans. Calls for a little more patience evoked the reverse reaction of impatience and protest.

On June 13 John Kennedy addressed the nation on television. "A great change is at hand," he said, "and our task, our obligation, is to make that revolution, that change, peaceful and constructive for all."

Change?

That same evening Medgar Evers, a Mississippi black leader, was killed at the door of his house.

On June 19 the president sent to Congress the most important draft law of his thousand days in the White House. The law provided for wide-scale desegregation and for measures against racial discrimination in hiring blacks and also laid down the means of ensuring the implementation of these measures.

On June 22 a group of black leaders was invited by John Kennedy to the White House. The forthcoming march on Washington was discussed. The president was apprehensive that a mass march would strengthen resistance in Congress to the law he had proposed, but his attempts to persuade those present at the meeting "to clear negroes from the streets" failed.

King came to the meeting as a man who had proved the rightness of his cause in spite of bitter enemies and sceptical, unstable allies—as a victor.

The freedom bell which had been struck in Birmingham rang loudly throughout the summer of 1963. Over four months 841 demonstrations for equal rights were held in 196 cities in 35 states.

The "March on Washington," which went into history, took place on August 28. In columns and singly thousands of people, both blacks and whites, moved towards the Washington monument, a granite needle almost 200 metres high. The early morning, before the August sun had begun to blaze down, was chill, but they were warm because they were a multitude, because their numbers were growing, because there were more of them than ever before. By midday 250,000 people had gathered. Solemnly, unhurriedly, following the instructions of their marshals, this endless mass of people flowed towards the 36 Doric columns of the Lincoln memorial, beneath the roof of which the ungainly, powerful form of the "great emancipator" is frozen in marble.

The year marked the 100th anniversary of the publication of Lincoln's famous Emancipation Proclamation and black strugglers and their allies had come to remind the country and its 35th president that they were still not free and that they had nothing to celebrate as long as clubs, dogs and fire-hoses barred their way even to a lunch-counter.

The meeting before the Lincoln memorial was chaired by

Philip Randolph, a veteran of the movement and president of the black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters trade union.

King was the last and most honoured speaker. As he waited to speak he looked tired from the tense preceding months and from the sleepless night he had just passed: he had worked on his speech until 4 a.m. in his Washington hotel room.

He spoke of a dream. Before a quarter of a million people he spoke of his dream as one speaks in a burst of rare confidence, among truly close and dear people, when one knows that not a single word or feeling will be in vain but will evoke the desired flow of unity and brotherhood in response. Martin Luther King had the great soul of a struggler and a poet, revealed to intimates and to the millions alike. And he had a great dream.

"I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a country where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

"I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, knowing we will be free one day...

"...When we allow freedom to ring—when we let it ring from every city and every hamlet, from every state, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last, Free at last, Great God a-mighty, We are free at last'."

The dream was a splendid one, and after beginning his speech in measured and calm tones, King was fired with passion and pain, with the African temperament of his forebears and spoke faster, as if hastening his dream, as if breathless at its inexpressible beauty. From the crowd blacks cried "Dream on! Dream on!" in ecstasy.

This was his greatest speech and his greatest day. After he was

shot writers and journalists placed him in history as a man who had had a dream. "I have a dream"—these words headed obituaries and formed the title of photographic albums and records that appeared with lightning speed after the Memphis assassination—contradictory signs of respect for King and of the posthumous commercialisation of this respect. The last words of his famous speech were carved on the white gravestone in Atlanta's Southern View Cemetery for blacks: "Free at last, Free at last, Great God a-mighty, I am free at last!" But all of this will be later.

But then, after that great day in his life, after the march organisers had visited the White House where, in the presence of the US president, Philip Randolph called the 34-year-old black from Atlanta "the moral leader of the nation", King returned to the South with the belief that *"the rough places will be made plain and the crooked places... straight," that the night of racism would give way before the morning of brotherhood.* Eighteen days after the Washington march, on the beautiful, sunny morning of September 15, 1963, the racists of Birmingham bombed a black Sunday school and killed four little black girls. Birmingham had stood on blood since its very first days, but even its history had never known such a crime. And, as if this was not enough, as if concentrating the terrorist blows, a white policeman killed another black child on that same bloody Sunday and a gang of white hooligans killed a black teenager peacefully riding his bicycle. Six innocent children...

In Birmingham a solemn funeral took place on September 18. Not a single representative of the municipal authorities attended and there were no expressions of official condolence; apart from a few brave clergymen no white citizens were present.

"More than children were buried that day," King noted, "honor and decency were also interred."

On November 22 1963 the shots of a year full of victims rang out, striking down President John Kennedy.

What feelings of hatred, violence and revenge gave rise to the idea of this murder? The Dallas secrets are not the subject of my notes. The general atmosphere of violence and intolerance in the country was intensified by the bitter racial conflicts of that year. Even the half measures taken by President Kennedy in defense of civil rights had won him the deadly reputation of being a negro sympathiser. After the racial tensions of the spring, summer and autumn of 1963 his popularity fell sharply. A November Gallup poll showed that only 59 per cent of Americans approved of the policies of the Kennedy Administration.

"While the question 'who killed President Kennedy?' is important, the question 'what killed him?' is more important," King emphasised in his book related to the Birmingham events. *"Our late president was assassinated by a morally inclement climate...*

"... President Kennedy has something important to say to each of us in his death. He has something to say to every politician who has fed his constituents the stale bread of racism and the spoiled meat of hatred. He has something to say to every clergyman who has observed racial evils and remained silent behind the safe security of stained-glass windows...

"... He says to all of us that this virus of hate that has seeped into the veins of our nation, if unchecked, will lead inevitably to our moral and spiritual doom."

In her memoirs King's widow, Coretta, recalls the day of the Dallas assault and the first reports that the president had been wounded. She and Martin sat by the television set, waiting for more news and praying for the life of John Kennedy. When the death of the president was announced, King remained silent for some time. Then he said: "This is what is going to happen to me also. I keep telling you, this is a sick society."

"I was not able to say anything," Coretta writes. "I had no word to comfort my husband. I could not say, 'It won't happen to you.' I felt he was right. It was a painfully agonizing silence. I moved closer to him and gripped his hand in mine."

The paths of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King crossed more than once during their lives, both physically and politically. The two men were opponents more often than they were allies, although an uneasy form of co-operation grew up between them in the last year of the president's life that could scarcely have been durable: after all, in Kennedy's opinion the blacks were demanding too much and too fast, while in King's opinion Kennedy was doing too little and acting too slowly and indecisively.

Both were killed and, although it would have been absurd during their lifetimes to weigh their chances of a violent death, only one of them was a hero, knowing what lay ahead and placing himself under an obligation devotedly to serve an ideal in his life.

After the funeral of John Kennedy, President Johnson announced in his first speech to the US Congress that the best memorial to the slain president would be the immediate adoption of the Civil-Rights Act Kennedy had sent to Capitol Hill at the height of the events in Birmingham.

The November days of grief passed. December came to an end and the 1963 Civil-Rights Act was renamed the 1964 Act, but the legislation remained stalled. Despite the urging of the White House, Congress dragged its feet. Spring came. Southern racists in the Senate blocked the passage of the law by means of a filibuster.

However, the filibusterers were fighting a rearguard action. They were able to weaken and emasculate some of the provisions of the act, but the efforts of President Johnson and the Northern Democrats led by Hubert Humphrey "forced" the law through the Senate, where it gained the necessary two-thirds majority. The law was also adopted by the House of Representatives.

On July 2, 1964, five hours after the vote in the House of Representatives, President Johnson signed the act in the White House, giving it the force of law. The ceremony was televised.

President Johnson explained the purpose of the law as being to state that "those who are equal before God shall now also be equal in the polling booths, in the classrooms, in the factories and in hotels and restaurants, and movie theatres, and other places that provide service to the public." He contrived to sign the text of the law, a document comprising 49 letters and punctuation marks, with 75 pens. The battery of pens that had been prepared was insufficient and an aide brought several dozen more. With regal familiarity Johnson tossed used pens to the senators and congressmen present at the ceremony, who gratefully caught them as souvenirs.

Black leaders were also invited to the ceremony. Dr King stood behind the president. Johnson presented King with a souvenir pen too.

"This will remain among my most cherished possessions," King said. And added: "I really should have got a bunch."

Johnson and Humphrey had received their laurels. For King and the other strugglers for equality, a new battle, not without risk, lay ahead to put the law into practice. Segregation had been abolished, but racists and racism had not disappeared. In the South, George Wallace, Mississippi governor Paul Johnson and their underlings were already declaring that they would not recognise the law, but would try to overthrow it through individual court cases and the resultant legal definitions. This challenge, too, would have to be accepted.

A new and thorny path lay ahead, but laurels had also fallen to King's lot—substantial laurels. Honest America welcomed him as one of the initiators of a powerful constitutional blow to racism.

The autumn of 1964 was a memorable one for King. On October 14 he entered St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta for a check-up and a period of recuperation from the physical and nervous exhaustion of the previous months. The following day the telephone rang in his ward.

"Martin! Martin!" came the happy voice of Coretta. "You have been awarded the Nobel Prize!"

The news was so unexpected and joyful that he did not immediately believe it.

On December evening in Oslo King, sternfaced, dressed in the customary black frock-coat and filled with dignity accepted his Prize as the leader of America's blacks.

In Oslo he was more than a spokesman for equal rights and justice for the dark-skinned pariahs of his country. He spoke as a man concerned about the fate of the entire world, who rejected "the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction". He spoke of the deprivations to which hundreds of millions of people in the world were subjected and called for "an all-out world war on poverty"—not only its symptoms but also its basic causes.

King returned to the United States crowned with Nobel laurels. In New York endless banquets and receptions awaited him. At the airport in his home-town of Atlanta, white Southerners—oh miracle!—asked for his autograph. In Washington he was an honoured guest.

King, however, was able to free himself of vanity, thinking not of his own merits but of the scale of the problems that remained. He was not to be tamed.

"I live every day under a threat of death and it is a fine contrast to have people say nice things," he told a mass reception in New York. *"I wish I could stay on the mountain, but the valley calls me—the valley of despair. I've got to go back to this valley."*

Already in January 1965 the Nobel laureate opened in Selma, Alabama, a long campaign for the right of blacks to register as voters without a property qualification or discriminatory checks of loyalty, literacy or ability to "interpret" the state constitution. Blacks constituted more than 40 per cent of Alabama's population, but their political weight in elected bodies was non-existent and only a few thousand blacks were registered on voting rolls. The famous 1964 law affirming the right of blacks to vote did not guarantee this right in the eyes of Sheriff Clark, George Wallace and others.

Jim Clark was cruel and stubborn, while Selma was indifferent to the truths proclaimed in Oslo concerning the effectiveness of non-violence.

Once again King rang the bell of freedom, leading march after march to the court house, where the registrar's office was located. Day after day Jim Clark and his men seized, drove off or arrested the marchers. The few blacks who succeeded in entering the

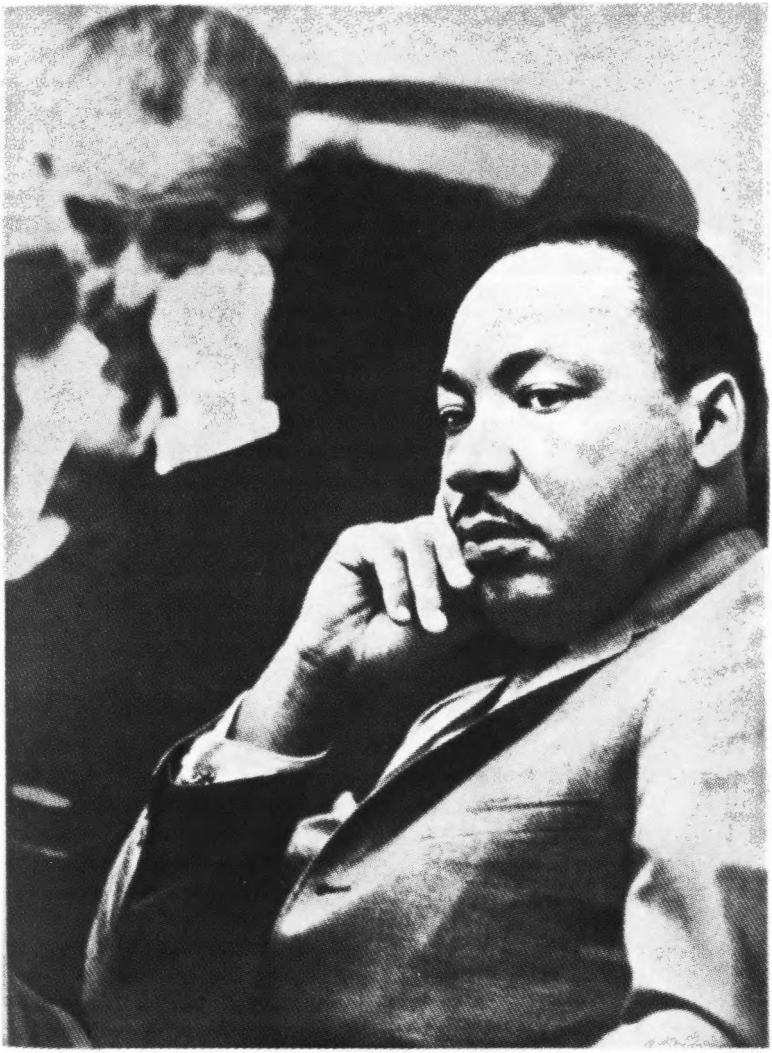
The campaigns King organised together with his dynamic position influenced the policy pursued both by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. The Civil-Rights Act was adopted in 1964 and the Law on Economic Rights was signed on April 11, 1968.

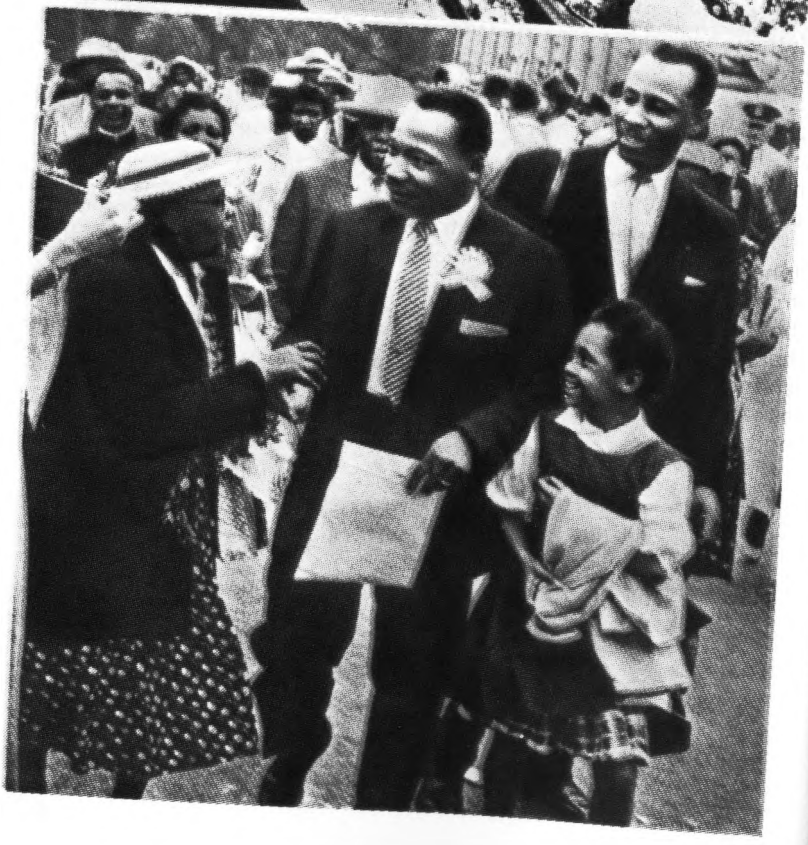
court house were subjected by the registering clerks to "literacy tests" which would have defeated professional philologists.

"We shall overcome!" the blacks sang. "Never!" proclaimed the badge Jim Clark pinned to his chest beside his sheriff's star.

In seven weeks 2,000 people were sent to prison.

When the police killed Jimmie Lee Jackson, a black woodcut-





ter, King called for a mass march from Selma to Montgomery, the state capital. On March 7 the march was broken up and the marchers were savagely beaten on the outskirts of Selma by police.

But once again the violence of the racists was objectively helpful to King. Once again death, blood and broken ribs were the price that had to be paid for public attention. The echo of the bloody conflict in Alabama resounded throughout America, arousing a wave of sympathy and support.

King called for a second march from Selma to Montgomery.

Fearing bloodshed, the federal authorities intervened to prohibit the march. White Americans coming from all over the country to participate in the march met with unrelenting hatred. James Reeb, a white clergyman from Boston, was caught and beaten to death by racists at the door of a black restaurant in Selma where he had gone for a meal. Then Viola Luizzo, a white housewife from Detroit and the mother of five children, was killed at the wheel of her car. The events in Selma had now assumed the proportions of a national crisis. Just as had happened a year previously during the Birmingham events, they forced the president of the United States to speak.

The march succeeded at the third attempt and the marchers reached Montgomery—under the protection of federal troops dispatched by the White House.

King delivered a speech in front of the Capitol in Montgomery, where the state legislators meet. The Capitol building is not far from Dexter Church where, during the bus boycott ten years before, King had begun his new life. An entire revolution in his life had passed since then and now, returning to Montgomery in a spring downpour, he spoke to the crowd, answering those who asked with increasing impatience when the disturbance would end.

"I know that you ask today: 'How long will this continue?' I want to tell you today that however difficult this moment is, however discouraging the hour, it will not last long, because the truth cast down will always rise up again. How long will this last? Not long, because no lie can

He was followed by hundreds of thousands of people and trusted by millions. He possessed the power which only incorruptibility and moral authority can give. He was a magnet to the masses.

live eternally. How long? Not long, because you yourselves will reap what you have sown."

The Selma campaign had two measurable outcomes. Three people were killed, dozens maimed and 3,800 arrested; and only fifty blacks were added to the electoral rolls. But there was also a third outcome. The blacks gained the adoption by the US Congress of another law: Voting Rights Act of 1965, which gave the federal authorities, not the Southern racists, the right to appoint registrars responsible for compiling voting rolls. On August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed this act in the Congress building. Among those present at the ceremony was Martin Luther King.

The Crowd Created the Leaders, Not the Leaders the Crowd

The acts, won through self-sacrificing struggle, had, of course, brought benefits. The struggle itself had straightened the American black's spine and taught him firmness and dignity. But when he gained legal civil rights he saw more acutely than ever before that, while he had been given formal equality, actual inequality remained.

While King and others were rousing the mass of blacks in the South and beating at the system of racism with the battering ram of marches, discovering that this system resembled not only a brick wall but also an all-engulfing swamp, blacks in the North were bursting the ghetto apart with their furious rage.

The limits of the slogan of civil rights itself were especially clear in the North. Blacks there had long enjoyed civil rights, given them by state laws even before federal legislation had been adopted, and the offensive signs dividing the races had long since disappeared, yet ghettoes and de facto segregation still existed.

The centre of the struggle had shifted from the South to the North. This was the result in large measure of the physical migration of black Americans to the North in the course of decades.

In 1968 blacks constituted more than half the population of Newark and two-thirds of the population of Washington, while

according to official forecasts, by 1985 they were to form a majority in such large cities as Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Gary, Cleveland, Oakland, Richmond and Saint Louis.

Official statistics indicated that, in 1967, the unemployment rate was twice as high among black as among white Americans. But these figures were incomplete. If the percentage of underemployment—that is, unemployment largely camouflaged by statistical graphs—was added to the unemployment percentage, the two categories embraced 33-34 per cent of blacks.

Rapid growth in the black population of the North thus went hand in hand with unemployment, the most generalised indicator of misery and poverty. These two facts meant a concentration not only of humanity but also of despair—a double concentration fraught with explosive potential.

To this should be added the situation at the beginning and in the middle of the 1960s: unprecedentedly long economic prosperity, which had not affected the overwhelming majority of black Americans, a sated "affluent society" which only tantalised them by its proximity and inaccessibility and the rapid advance of science and technology, resulting in "technological unemployment" for the blacks as automation increased and the need for unskilled labour fell.

Add, finally, an important psychological factor—loss of hope. The black bending his back in the cotton plantations of the South, oppressed by the petty and large-scale tyranny of the racists and living in constant fear, traditionally dreamed of the North as a place where he could find freedom and a decent life.

But these unhappy people found, as the black writer Claude Brown has written, that they had fallen from the fire onto the frying-pan, for one of the most important aspects of the promised land which they had not suspected was the ghetto slum.

"Our parents coming to Harlem produced a generation of new niggers," Brown wrote with ironic humour, "... but this new nigger was something that nobody understood and that nobody was ready for."

Poverty is not a crime, but it is a social misfortune. Honest people cannot but feel sympathy and solidarity with those who have been humiliated and insulted but no one has yet invented a mechanism that will automatically equip the poor with the angel's wings of immaculate moral purity. Where there are rats, crowded apartments and day-labour, despair and broken souls are also to be found. When a racial barrier is added to all the other obstacles poverty erects on the path of individual human development, few

means of self-affirmation remain to a person, especially a young person, and one of them, alas, is crime.

The crime-rate among Harlem youngsters was double the New York average; there were eight to ten times more drug addicts; the percentage of venereal disease was six times greater; the percentage of tuberculosis victims one and a half times greater and infant mortality double the New York average.

The state of the black family was a cause of especial concern. The percentage of broken families, divorces and illegitimate children was catastrophically high in the North. In Harlem two of every five children were growing up without fathers.

Thus inflammable, socially explosive human material was accumulating in the ghetto, within major cities—the focal point of American civilisation. Sparks are always in abundance in the supercharged atmosphere.

At seven o'clock in the evening of August 11, 1965, white police stopped the car of Marquette Frye, a black American, in Watts, a southern suburb of Los Angeles, where tens of thousands of blacks live in rented houses. Frye was accused of reckless driving. He resisted, the policemen pressed hard. A crowd quickly formed and someone shouted that a cop had shoved a pregnant black woman. The police, having warded off the crowd, took Frye away. Inflamed by what had happened and by the California heat, the crowd did not disperse; instead, it grew, swelled by people and rumours. Stones were thrown at the whites driving through the area and counter-attacks were mounted against police drafted in to restore order. The rebellion spread rapidly and fiercely, like a forest fire when inflammable material is all around—white policemen, the shops of white exploiters and simply the element of indiscriminate hatred. The rebellion overflowed from district to district. At first, individual houses were set on fire, then dozens and hundreds were put to the torch. The first shops were plundered. Streets were seized by foolhardy youths. Police reinforcements were oil poured on fire.

The flames, literally and figuratively, raged for four days. The carbines and colts of the "forces of law and order" took the lives of 34 blacks. Fires blazed in 150 districts covering an area of 46 square miles. It was only towards evening on August 14 that the rebellion was crushed by 14,000 guardsmen and 1,500 policemen. According to official statistics, some 10,000 blacks were involved. A total of 1,032 people were injured and 3,952 blacks were arrested. Damage to property was estimated at 40 million dollars. Six hundred buildings were damaged and 200 were burned to the ground.

A commission to investigate the rebellion was set up by California governor Edmund Brown. The millionaire John McCone, former head of the CIA, was chosen to chair the commission. Ring-leaders were sought with the idea of blaming everything on "subversive elements," but even McCone was unable to unearth a conspiracy. The rebellion was spontaneous.

The commission warned that "the existing breach, if allowed to persist, could in time split our society irretrievably."

The August rebellion dealt a heavy psychological blow to King's conception of non-violent struggle. By coincidence it exploded only five days after President Johnson had signed the Voting Rights Act.

From 1966 the racial front was gripped by new tension, but the record of Watts remained unbroken.

Then came the record year of 1967. This was generally considered to have presented the most serious internal political crisis since the civil war. The spring saw racial disturbances in Nashville, Tennessee, Jackson, Mississippi and Houston, Texas; the summer was the longest and hottest ever. Racial explosions turned almost the entire country into a mine-field—wherever you stepped, you might be blown into the air.

In July 1967 the United States was confronted by the spectre of a new civil war. Congress, where anti-black hysteria raged, poured oil on the flames. On July 19 the House of Representatives voted for a riot act directed against the "instigators" of unrest. The act declared any crossing of state borders (including "crossings" in the form of postal dispatches) with the aim of fomenting and organising riots a criminal offense. On July 20 the House struck down a bill allocating 40 million dollars for the extermination of rats. In rejecting the bill congressmen were openly scoffing at a specific curse of ghetto life.

Amid the unprecedentedly tense relations between the races, Congress's action took on a symbolic character: blacks were reminded they could scarcely expect understanding from the legislators.

President Johnson hastened to defuse the situation, sharply attacking the congressmen and terming their action "a cruel blow to the poor children of America."

The racial upheavals took place against the background of the US war in Vietnam and the already exacerbated internal political situation. Analogies with Vietnam were inescapable. Just as with the Vietnamese, Washington and the city and state authorities talked to their own "coloureds" in the language of the gun. The readiness to use armed force and the speed and "naturalness"

with which it was used were striking, testifying in their own way to the extent to which militarism had penetrated the thinking of American politicians.

Vietnam also figured in the balance of payments, explaining the critical situation in the ghettoes: the war in the jungles absorbed 24,000 million dollars a year, as compared to the 1,900 million dollars spent annually on the domestic "war on poverty". President Johnson recalled his promises of a "great society" less and less, while his critics spoke of a "sick society" more and more. Senator Fulbright noted correctly that it was impossible, even psychologically, to wage two wars simultaneously—against the North Vietnamese and against poverty in the United States—since attention, not to mention resources, was entirely devoted to the former. The riots revealed another aspect of this truth. The dirty war in the jungles, involving the merciless extermination of another people, had psychologically prepared the US leaders and, indeed, the greater part of the population for harsh methods of dealing with blacks—the "other America."

Despite an intensive search for "agitators" and an attempted smear campaign against the rioters, all investigations without exception confirmed that the riots had flared up spontaneously and that the rioters had neither a programme nor clear political and economic aims. Although seats of racial disturbance emerged almost simultaneously in dozens of cities, they were isolated from each other and lacked a united leadership or even recognised leaders. As Senator Fred Harris later observed, the crowd created the leaders, not the leaders the crowd.

Mass raids on shops, looting and arson were also convincing evidence of the spontaneous, savage, destructive character of the protest. This was vengeance, not just law-breaking, vengeance precisely aimed at the nation of property-owners.

The campaign of pacification and punishment mounted by the authorities proceeded with harsh force.

Despite slightly differing positions, all bourgeois America joined forces against the rebels, from racist Southern senators and FBI head J. Edgar Hoover to Northern liberals. While retaining their reservations concerning the social ulcers of the ghettoes, the liberals nevertheless subscribed eagerly to the slogan of the day—crush without mercy. The press isolated and exaggerated a single feature of the entire complex picture: attacks on property, arson and robbery. All operations undertaken by the army and the police were veiled by references to "law and order."

The majority of apolitical or politically moderate citizens,

frightened by the flames and smoke they saw on their television screens, tilted in the direction of outright racists.

The White House announced the setting up of a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders under the president. The president instructed the commission, which was headed by Otto Kerner, governor of Illinois, to elucidate what had happened and why and to suggest what could be done to prevent it from happening again.

Johnson named eleven members to the commission, including two blacks—Roy Wilkins and Edward Brooke, the senator from Massachusetts. As the press later reported, the commission split not along colour lines but between liberals and conservatives. The former category numbered six, the latter five.

The numerical superiority of the liberals and the weight of facts generally ensured their victory over the conservatives. When on February 29, 1968, after seven months of investigations, the commission transmitted its findings to the president and the press in the form of a stout volume, it proved a political bombshell and showed that, in extraordinary circumstances, bourgeois America was capable of serious self-criticism.

The Kerner commission's report "rehabilitated" those thousands of black people who had stormily voiced their protest during the hot summer days of 1967, by proving that they had grounds for protest. The report was a powerful indictment of the American social system, which had given rise to racism.

"This is our basic conclusion," the report stated. *"Our nation is moving towards two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.*

"Reaction to last summer's disorders had quickened the movement and deepened the division. Discrimination and segregation have long permeated much of American life, they now threaten the future of every American."

Black leaders responded to the events of the riotous summer in different ways. Martin Luther King, Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young issued a joint statement calling on blacks to act against "violence on the streets." Blacks, they wrote, "paid" for riots in killed, injured or imprisoned men and women, went hungry because neighbourhood shops had been burnt or pillaged, saw their children go without milk because deliveries were paralysed and were not paid because transport ceased to function or their places of work were destroyed. Blacks should not tolerate unemployment, bad housing, bad schools, insults, humiliations or attacks, the four authors noted; nevertheless, they condemned riots as a form of protest.

A different line was taken by radicals. Floyd McKissick, President of the Congress of Racial Equality, accused King, Randolph, Wilkins and Young of condemning "the violence of the victim."

"History will likely record the explosions of this summer as the beginning of the black revolution," McKissick declared. "The criminal connotation of the term 'riots' will be erased. They will be recognized for what they are—rebellions against oppression and exploitation."

Stokely Carmichael, the leader of one of the largest black organisations, who was in Cuba when the events broke out, declared that the United States should be destroyed. His only dream, he said, was to live to see that day.

The Kerner commission's report was given almost unanimous approval by black leaders. However, Martin Luther King added a note of scepticism to this chorus. In approving the commission's recommendation that 2 million jobs be created for blacks, King emphasised that similar recommendations had "been made before almost to the last detail and have been ignored almost to the last detail."

In the Black Ghettoes and in the Jungles of Vietnam

Our account of the ghetto riots has been protracted, but necessary: King, after all, did not think of himself as an outsider in the historical struggle that millions of black Americans were waging, consciously or instinctively.

However big King was, he was, alas, no bigger than life, to recall an American expression. And no bigger than the cause to which he was linked.

Sometimes Martin Luther King directed events or, at any rate, was at the very centre of them—in Montgomery in 1955 and 1956, in Birmingham in 1963 and in Selma in 1965. But sometimes events pushed him, impotent and helpless, to the background, as in the riotous summer of 1967.

These events have led me away from King, but only in order to place him in an historical perspective. This diminishes him by

making him only one of many, but also elevates him by showing the truly immense problems he tried to solve.

Martin Luther King was a simple and modest man in his private life, but he certainly did not underestimate his own importance on the public stage. On the contrary, he was aware of his public significance and his mission. King himself stated frankly: *"History has thrust me into this position. It would be both immoral and a sign of ingratitude if I did not face my moral responsibility to do what I can in this struggle." Nevertheless, his relationship to the common cause was that of pupil to teacher, maturing with events and becoming absorbed by goals of ever increasing complexity.*

And now let us return to where we left Martin Luther King—the president's room on Capitol Hill, August 6, 1965, where Abraham Lincoln's walnut table, covered with a green cloth, is lovingly preserved. Lyndon Johnson had chosen this room and this day for their unique associations. He signed the act on voting rights with a battery of pens exactly 104 years after Lincoln had signed the Proclamation that emancipated the black slaves of America forcibly enlisted into the confederate army—and in the very same room. "Today is a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory on any battlefield," he declared. "Today we strike away the last major shackles of those fierce and ancient bonds."

A week before this ceremony the president had ordered a sharp increase in the number of US troops in South Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000. This was the largest increase and the second escalation of the war in the Vietnamese jungles since bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had commenced in February that year.

Martin Luther King again received a souvenir pen, but he was not carried away by the president's rhetoric. On a visit to the White House the previous day he had informed Lyndon Johnson that segregation in the North was increasing rather than diminishing. King had just returned from a trip to Chicago, Cleveland and Philadelphia, where he had been convinced again that the problems of de facto segregation in the North were no less acute than they were in the South. In Philadelphia, the "cradle of freedom", where the Declaration of Independence had been made on July 4, 1776, King had led a protest march to Girard College, a boarding school for poor orphans, which had not admitted a single black in 117 years.

At the end of July King tried his strength for the first time in the black districts of Chicago's West Side. Unlike the South, the church there was not the hub uniting the black community. The

inhabitants of the ghetto were not attached to religion, nor did they hope for the promised land. King delivered his speech-sermons, not from church pulpits, but from trucks parked at intersections. However, thousands of people came to hear him speak, for here, too, he was known and loved.

"We will change this city," King promised.

On July 26 he led a march of 15,000 people—the largest march by blacks in Chicago's history.

But the city on Lake Michigan, where approximately one million blacks lived—more than in the state of Mississippi—had its own specific difficulties. Some of the local black leaders came to King in secret, bringing with them embarrassed apologies for their inability to help him. Others, dispensing with apologies and visits, declared the formation of their own organisation of "action" and let it be known that there was nothing for the Atlanta pastor to do in Chicago, that he was "not objective" and that black Chicagoans would manage their own affairs. The former were held back and the latter pushed forward by the same hand—

King's first objective was to improve the housing conditions of blacks and to expose the extortionate practice of charging high prices for slum apartments in Chicago.

the powerful, experienced hand of Mayor Richard Daley. This corrupt politician had been elected to the post of mayor three times and was an indisputable boss of the city's Democratic Party machine. By pursuing the stick and carrot policy, he had created among local blacks a network of people loyal to him, people who guaranteed him influence and electoral votes. The mayor of Chicago verbally sympathised with the blacks, accepted petitions, promised to consider complaints favorably, but... King produced a penetrating characterisation of this type of Northern politician-bureaucrat: *"Many of them sat on platforms... and showered praise on the heroism of Southern Negroes. Yet when the issues were raised concerning local conditions only the language was polite: the rejection was firm and unequivocal."*

After the July reconnaissance, it was decided that King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference should extend its efforts to the Northern ghettoes. The rebellion in Watts in August 1965 reinforced King's resolution. Events were making speed vital.

Chicago was chosen as a test ground.

In the autumn of 1965, the first group of King's associates, led by James Bevel, settled in the Chicago slum area of Lawndale and began preparations for an extended operation.

140,000 despairing impoverished people lived in the slums of Lawndale. King and his wife moved there in October 1965, taking a miserable little apartment in a house on Hamlin Avenue. The apartment was on the third floor and access was by way of an external wooden staircase. From the rickety balcony they could see a corner of "bloody" 16th Street, the home of drug addicts, bandits and burglars.

The Chicago campaign continued intermittently throughout 1966 and the beginning of 1967.

On July 10, 1966, when 45,000 people took part in a march on City Hall, King proclaimed an extensive programme of demands upon the city authorities: complete integration and a doubling of the budget of public schools, improved public transport in the ghetto, distribution of municipal benefits in direct proportion to the population density of Chicago's different districts, the construction of new suburbs containing 10,000 low-rent municipal apartments and a policy of emptying the slums by means of this construction.

In August, when the situation had become extremely heated, the city authorities, business circles and the blacks concluded a compromise, nine-point agreement. King declared it a most

important programme for eliminating discrimination in housing, but many people did not agree with this optimistic assessment. The Chicago campaign was not a success. The slums had no difficulty in resisting the blows of the Union to End Slums, which had been set up by King's associates. The "slumlords"—slum property-owners—did not disappear or ruined themselves. Mayor Daley remained the indisputable boss of the city's political machine and won re-election. Attempts to mobilise black voters against Daley failed.

King usually spent three days of every week in Chicago. He did not forget his parishioners at the Ebenezer Church and, as always, he travelled widely. New problems changed the content of his speeches and he spoke more of the system of exploitation of blacks in the North than of civil rights in the South and of the billions of dollars that would be needed in the ghettoes to avoid a new Watts; he referred ever more frequently to Vietnam, where these billions were in fact being spent.

Pessimism was alien to him, but secretly he was perplexed. Amid the complex political and economic stratagems of the big cities the simple strike tactics, which at meetings in Southern churches he had summed up with the call: "Brothers, put on your walking shoes and let's march for freedom!", were ineffective.

But once he put aside the Chicago campaign and other affairs to fly South at short notice in order to put on his walking shoes and step out under the scorching Mississippi sun together with his comrades of earlier marches. He learned how far their ways had parted and how far they were from each other. An attempt on James Meredith's life was the reason for this travel. James Meredith had at one time studied at Columbia University in New York and then in distant Nigeria. He had decided to visit his native Mississippi and find out what progress had been made following the Civil-Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965.

He preferred independent action and shunned organisations of every kind. In Mississippi he wanted to walk 350 kilometres alone along Highway 51, which runs from north to south across the state to Jackson, the capital. On his way he was shot at by a certain James Aubrey Norwell, an unemployed clerk.

When he learned of the attack King immediately flew to the wounded man's bedside in Memphis. Stokely Carmichael, Floyd

Addressing the thousands in the crowd, Martin Luther King would call: "Brothers, put on your walking shoes and let's march for freedom!"

McKissick, Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young, the leaders of the five major black organisations, also flew to Memphis. The five men found it unacceptable that Norwell, emerging from the undergrowth by the road, had without difficulty stopped a man wanting to measure progress in the South after hard years of struggle and sacrifice with a charge of birdshot. The idea of a mass march to Jackson following Meredith's route was conceived.

The five men had flown to Memphis to demonstrate their unity, but a profound split was soon revealed. Differences came to the surface as soon as the five began to draw up a manifesto setting forth the aim of the march. (Meredith, after agreeing to the march, was taken to a New York hospital to recover, having been virtually thrown out of the Memphis hospital in a semi-conscious state.)

Carmichael saw the march as an accusation of and a challenge not only to Southern racists but also to the Federal government. "We've got to tell the Federal government about all those lies they have been telling us," the young Carmichael cried furiously.

Roy Wilkins defended the president. King tried to achieve a compromise that would reconcile the arguers.

A manifesto was issued, although Wilkins did not sign it and refused to participate in the march. The manifesto declared the march on Jackson to be "a massive public indictment of and a protest against the failure of American society, the government of the US and the state of Mississippi" to ensure the civil rights enshrined in the acts of 1964 and 1965 and called on President Johnson to send federal referees to 600 Southern counties to speed up the registration of black voters and to approve the idea of a "freedom budget" allocating many thousands of millions of dollars to aid poor blacks.

The march to Jackson lasted three weeks. There were few white marchers and the young blacks became increasingly implacable and intolerant. Throughout the march, especially in the evenings, when the column settled down for the night, King held discussions and sometimes entered into sharp exchanges with Carmichael and McKissick. At the age of 37 King had a look of paternal weariness and calm by comparison with the impulsive 24-year-old Carmichael. Like Meredith, Stokely Carmichael dreamed of guns and had lost all hope of curing the soul of white America. In five years of struggle he had been arrested 27 times. He had rejected the methods of non-violence and thirsted for revenge. His voice expressed with increasing loudness the views of young black radicals and extremists.

When the marchers passed through the Mississippi town of Greenwood where, two years previously, he had suffered at the hands of the racists and had led a "freedom school" at the risk of his life, he put forward the slogan "black power" for the first time.

"We call upon blacks not to go to Vietnam but to stay in Greenwood and fight here," Carmichael told a meeting in the city park to shouts of approval. "If they put one of us in jail, we will not post bail to free him. We shall go to the jail and free him ourselves."

Then one of his companions climbed on to the platform and shouted at the black crowd:

"What do we want?"

"Black power!" answered the crowd in unison. Carmichael's assistants had already spread the new slogan.

"What do we want?"

"Black power!" the young people responded still more loudly.

That evening a disturbed King spent five hours trying to persuade Carmichael and McKissick to drop this slogan, which he feared would provoke white America and harm the cause. Carmichael and McKissick remained adamant and rejected the compromise formulas. Carmichael said that he had deliberately tried out the new slogan during the march that was being followed by the whole country. He wanted the slogan to be heard immediately.

King saw that young people were responding to Carmichael's slogan with greater enthusiasm than to his calls for non-violence.

After the march on Jackson a war of words broke out. Black leaders publicly abused each other. Roy Wilkins said that "black power" meant black racism and would lead to "black death". Vice-President Humphrey supported him. Floyd McKissick condemned Wilkins, saying that the latter did not know the mood of the blacks.

In a vain attempt to achieve unity King criticised both sides: the radicals, for hastily producing their slogan without clarifying it, and the moderates, for failing to understand the reasons that gave rise to this slogan.

"The Negro is in dire need of a sense of dignity and a sense of pride, and I think 'black power' is an attempt to develop pride," King said in an interview with *The New York Times*. *"And there is no doubt about the need for power... But the use of the phrase 'black power' gives the feeling that Negroes can do it alone and that they don't need anybody but themselves. We have to keep remembering that we are only 10 or 11 per cent of the population."*

King rejected black nationalism and, even more emphatically, black racism both as a Christian priest and as a political realist. He had dreamed of the brotherhood of blacks and whites all his life and he proclaimed this dream in his best-known speech delivered on August 28, 1963, before the quarter of a million people who took part in the march on Washington and the whole of America. Calls for brotherhood formed the dominant note of his activity. And whenever the racists tried the patience of the blacks by some fresh crime, some fresh outrage, driving them towards the final, fatal frontier of despair, King did everything he could to bring them back from this frontier through passionate calls for brotherhood. His strategy of non-violence, which presupposed the persuasion and re-education of the enemy by moral force and firmness, was based on a belief in the possibility of brotherhood.

King was both a clergyman, believing in the effectiveness of preaching brotherhood and love, and a leader with his own ideas concerning responsibility to the masses and political realism. From the leader's point of view, the idea of brotherhood was a practical necessity, dictated by circumstances. *"The price our country must pay for continued oppression of the Negro is its own destruction,"* King warned. *"We must learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish as fools."* He taught the blacks not to lose faith in their "white brothers," choosing for himself the role of a bridge across the chasm. But the chasm grew wider, its banks were eroded by the rapid currents of distrust and hatred flowing from both sides.

The number of young blacks who had lost all hope of peacefully reconstructing America grew. King met these young blacks in Chicago, on the march to Jackson and in the Northern ghettoes. In Detroit in 1967 he, Wilkins, Young and Randolph called on blacks to refrain from violence. But then, in a letter to *The New York Times*, King, indicating that he could not fully express his viewpoint in the declaration issued by the four, shifted his criticism to those who incited violence—the American system, Congress and the US government. Yes, he wrote, there is blood on the hands of some blacks and they will pay the price exacted by society. *But "what of the blood on the hands of a Congress that sneered at a modest bill to control the rats; that, in cooperation with Administration, is more than halving desperately needed anti-poverty programs? What shall be said of the white society that coldly stiffened its resistance to reforms?"*

King sought a solution to the problem not in a choice between the moderation of the black bourgeoisie, cut off from the mass of

blacks, and the extremism of black nationalists, agitating for a guerrilla war in the ghettoes, but in the "militant non-violence" formula, which set the more radical goal of mass civil disobedience. King began to speak of this method, which Mahatma Gandhi had used against the British colonialists, in August 1967.

"Mass civil disobedience can use rage as a constructive and creative force," he declared.

Thus the bold idea of paralysing the great American cities by campaigns of civil disobedience was born. King believed that it had at least two advantages over riots. Firstly, it was more effective, since such campaigns could be more prolonged and costly to society, although not so wantonly destructive. Secondly, the government would find it more difficult to suppress such campaigns by superior force.

The idea of mass civil disobedience took concrete shape in the idea of a "poor people's" march on Washington—black and white poor people, Mississippi and Alabama share-croppers, Chicano field-workers from California and unemployed white miners from the Appalachians—all the insulted and humiliated of America.

An army of poor people in direct confrontation with the federal authorities—that was the crown and culmination of King's political development. It was a path that proved a thorny one.

Before dwelling on this march in more detail, we must turn our attention to another public cause which reflected the evolution of the Baptist clergyman from Atlanta—his struggle against the Vietnam war.

From the beginning of 1965 the political, moral and economic atmosphere of the United States had been electrified by the war in Vietnam. This became increasingly the case with the passage of time. The war taught a lesson which increasing numbers of blacks learned: the cruel machine of US imperialism which was operating in the jungles of Vietnam was the same machine that operated in the black ghettoes of the United States. The Kerner commission discovered that more than half the black rioters it questioned considered that the country which treated them like an evil stepmother was not worthy of defence in the event of war.

The war in Vietnam diverted not only the financial resources but also the social energy and attention of the United States. The black problem—one of the country's most important internal problems—seemed, psychologically, less pressing. The forces of protest against the war grew, but the honest white Americans who were part of the protest were less active in the movement for equal rights than they had been, for example, in 1963-1964. In their turn, moderate black leaders kept blacks out of the anti-war

protest. "We have enough Vietnams in Alabama," Roy Wilkins said justifying this tactic.

Dr King's anti-war stand stemmed, naturally, from his pacifism as a clergyman and a proponent of non-violence. He believed that in the nuclear age the true choice in international relations was not between violence and non-violence but between non-violence and non-existence.

On April 4, 1967, King delivered a program speech at the Riverside Church in New York City. His speech aroused a wide response.

The meeting in this majestically gloomy skyscraper church on the high bank of the Hudson in Upper Manhattan had been called by an anti-war organisation of the clergy.

King appeared first below, on the basement floor, where there were rooms for guests and conferences. I saw him close then for the first time: a short, thickset man in a heavy black suit. He had an inner solemnity which precluded familiarity and the sort of back-slapping so loved in the United States. He was the leader of hundreds of thousands of people, a man who was trusted by millions.

Dr King had power, the kind of power given to people for their incorruptibility and moral prestige, and I remember that particular enthusiasm, the expression on the faces of the audience sitting in the pews when he appeared on the rostrum.

His speech was as solemn as a vow and as frank as a confession.

"A time comes when silence is betrayal," he began. "That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam...

"Over the past two years as I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart, as many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path... Why are you speaking about the war, Dr King? Why are you joining the voices of dissent? Peace and civil rights don't mix, they say. Aren't you hurting the cause of your people, they ask. And when I hear them, though I often understand the source of their concern, I am nevertheless greatly saddened, for such questions mean that the inquirers have not really known me... Indeed, their questions suggest that they do not know the world in which we live."

He explained how inseparably the struggle against the war and the struggle for equality were linked.

"A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope

for the poor—both black and white—through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the build-up in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube."

As a humanist and true patriot, as a black American, he laid bare the cruel irony of the unjust war being waged by an unjust society under the guise of freedom and justice.

"We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village but we realise that they would never live on the same block in Chicago."

As a struggler for social and racial equality and a penetrating critic, he considered the US war in Vietnam a symptom of a deeper disease and warned that "a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defence than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death". Today he could repeat these words.

His speech met with an ovation. Martin Luther King was, perhaps, the US anti-war movement's most valuable acquisition, a magnet to the masses.

Civil fearlessness is a rarer and higher quality than physical fearlessness. King knew the fire he would draw on himself when he came out openly against the war. For official America and for the White House he became persona non grata. Anti-war radicalism was repugnant to many of his liberal bourgeois adherents and donations to his organisation dropped sharply, many letters requesting material assistance were returned demonstratively unopened. Finally, the danger of attempts on his life increased amid the atmosphere of newspaper persecution and ostracism. Did he know this? Of course. But King was not accustomed to retreat.

"Say that I Was a Drum Major for Justice"

The clergyman from Atlanta did know how to see the world and learn from life. How far he travelled between December 1955 and April 1968, when an assassin's bullet ended for ever the evolution of Martin Luther King's social and political views and activity!

What was the difference between the initial and the final aims of the struggle, between the initial and the final opponents? A worthy place in the buses for the black citizens of Montgomery and a worthy place under the sun for the poor people of America, both white and black. Struggle against the humiliating notices "Coloureds only" and principled opposition to the internal and external policy of the United States, for King eventually saw transformation of the structure of racist imperialism from within as his goal.

The last legislative act King and his followers wanted to wrest from Congress and the president was an act on economic rights, which would have guaranteed poor Americans work and a living wage.

King's last campaign was directed not at a boycott of the shops of Birmingham or at bringing pressure to bear on the racists of Selma, who refused to register black voters, but at paralysing the entire governmental machinery of Washington for weeks and possibly months, thereby forcing it to change the priorities of government spending.

From the autumn of 1967, the Atlanta headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was engaged in preparing the poor people's march. Three thousand activists, the vanguard of the protest army, were to converge on the capital from various states and erect a Hooverville of shacks and tents that would be impossible to ignore by the neo-classical departments and offices of Washington. The main roads were to be blocked. Queues of sick people without money for treatment were to form at the hospitals. Sit-ins were to be organised in government institutions.

Pickets and deputations were to disrupt the soulless functioning of the bureaucratic machine, forcing the federal authorities to

respond under dramatic circumstances to the cry: do poor people in America, in fact, have the right to "jobs and wages"?

King regarded the poor people's march as the last desperate test of non-violence, an attempt to direct accumulating fury and hatred into the channel of constructive protest. Failure would open the way to rioting in the ghettoes.

US capitalism was being threatened in its political citadel, a fact which did not escape clear-sighted observers. The writer and journalist José Yglésias, who spent many days in the small rooms of King's Atlanta headquarters, summed up his impressions as follows: "The tactics are non-violent and the tone of the language in S.C.L.C. literature is moral, but the substance of the demands is revolutionary for America: class demands dramatically expressed through other than orderly democratic process."

Yglésias asked King to confirm this conclusion. King replied: "In a sense, you could say we are engaged in the class struggle, yes... It will be a long and difficult struggle, for our program calls for a redistribution of economic power."

A picket line set up by striking garbage collectors in Memphis surrounded by a stationary line of national guardsmen with their rifles at the ready. The message on the placards was spelled out to the soldiers in large letters: "I Am a Man."

King continued by discussing the Biblical parable of the beggar Lazarus and the rich man. Lazarus had not gone to heaven simply because he was poor, King argued, nor the rich man to hell because he was rich. "No, the rich man was punished because he passed Lazarus every day and did not see him." King concluded: "And I tell you if this country does not see its poor—if it lets them remain in their poverty and misery—it will surely go to hell!"

Four days after his assassination Coretta King said at a memorial meeting: "He gave his life for the poor of the world—the garbage workers of Memphis and the peasants of Vietnam."

He proved the truth of those words by the course of his life and struggle and by his death.

The end of March 1968 saw a lull on the American racial front.

A strike was in progress only in Memphis, Tennessee, organised by the city's garbage collectors.

Tennessee is the door to the South. Memphis is a city on the Mississippi with 550,000 inhabitants, 40 per cent of whom—over 200,000—are black.

Street-cleaning is dirty work and as a rule it is done by black Americans hired by the city council. In Memphis their ultimate boss was the mayor, Henry Loeb. The 1,300 strikers demanded wage rises and official recognition of their trade union.

This modest strike, knowledge of which was confined to Memphis, continued for more than forty days without visible prospects of success. Firemen were called out more frequently than usual as people sought to dispose of mounting piles of rubbish by burning it.

So long as the strike did not attract the attention of Dr King it caused the authorities little trouble. However, when King arrived in Memphis he declared a march of solidarity—a by no means superfluous rehearsal for the Washington battle, incidentally. King followed his traditional method of dramatising the situation and forging "creative tension" in the city with the aim of frightening the authorities and forcing them to negotiate and make concessions.

On March 28, a week before the fatal shooting, the peace of Memphis was broken by a march of protest and solidarity.

From morning onwards thousands of people walked along Beale Street, past pawnshops and cheap stores. At their head was King, arm in arm with Ralph Abernathy and Ralph Jackson.

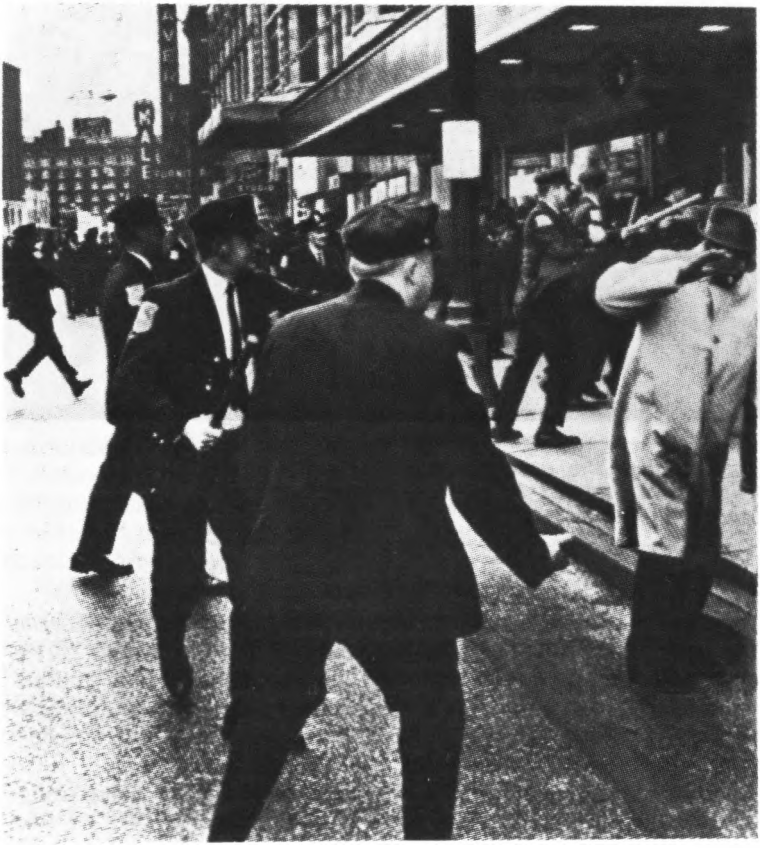
Ahead and to either side of them were policemen, clubs at the ready, colts in open holsters on their hips, walkie-talkies with needle-like aerials in their hands. Large crash-helmets, leggings, number-badges pinned to their shirts.

Where had they come from, these nimble and intrepid black teenagers? They had cut classes and wanted to join the marchers, but the policemen accompanying the marchers were like a convoy guard—there was no room in the column for outsiders.

Bricks were thrown at policemen and shop-windows, broken glass showered and here and there hands were hastily thrust between jagged shards to grab goods from windows.

Hooliganism? Revenge? Or the brief, unthinking intoxication of young people gripped by the deceptive idea that for a moment Beale Street belonged to them with its white-owned stores and

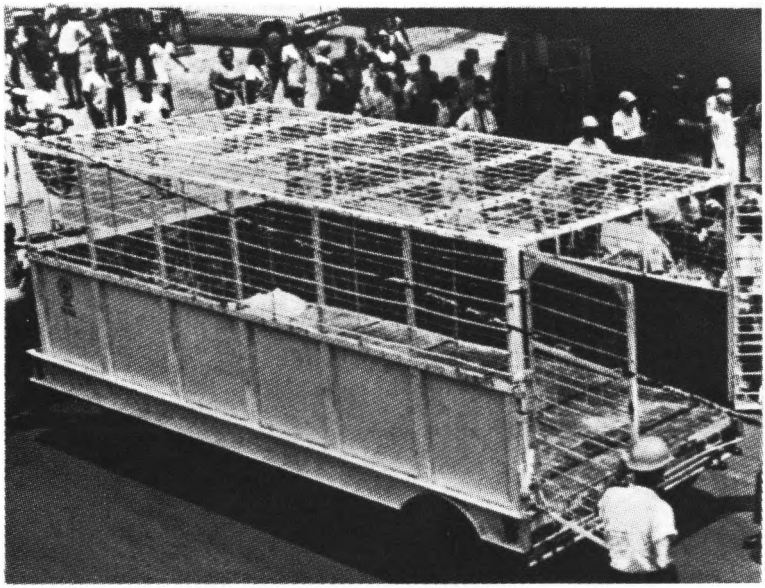
The police dispersing the participants in the demonstration.



pawn-shops—surely it must belong to them if there were so many black people around?

The next day Earl Lunning, Chairman of the Insurance Council of Memphis, announced that the shop-windows of 155 stores had been smashed and that looters had entered five per cent of them. Statistics issued by the police listed a 16-year-old black killed, 60 people injured and 200 arrested.

The legislative assembly of Tennessee reacted swiftly. Mayors



In a minute the participants in the demonstration will be put in this cage specially prepared for them.

were given permission to introduce a curfew and Henry Loeb was the first to take advantage of this. From 7 p.m. on March 28 the streets of Memphis were deserted. Their emptiness was guaranteed by 4,000 national guardsmen who had been rapidly dispatched to the city by Buford Ellington, the state governor. A further 8,000 soldiers were placed in a state of readiness.

White Memphis had taken measures to counter a black uprising. But the explosion never came.

As soon as rocks and clubs began to fly King was pushed into a car and driven away to an unknown destination.

King had not expected the insane tap dance on Beale Street.

"If I had known there was a possibility of violence yesterday, I would not have had that particular march," he said.

On March 29 the striking garbage collectors set up pickets. They marched in a long, thin line beneath the warm southern sun,

surrounded by another line, equally long and thin but unmoving, of national guardsmen with unslung rifles. The shadows of bayonets stabbed the placards on the picketers' chests. The message of the placards was spelled out to the soldiers in large letters: "I Am a Man."

However, the cries of outrage that were heard did not concern the humanity of the Memphis garbage collector, but were directed at the black anarchy which had emerged once more in Memphis and which it was time—high time!—to put a stop to. Angry veins swelled on Washington's forehead. Robert Byrd, the senator from West Virginia, proposed banning the poor people's march on the capital by court order. Byrd attacked King and criticised his plans which could, if not prevented, he claimed, bring to Washington "the same kind of violence, destruction,

looting and bloodshed." President Johnson himself, in three separate speeches on March 29, warned that he would not tolerate "thoughtless violence."

The shadow of the Memphis failure now lay on the Washington march and retreat would doom it beyond recall.

"We are fully determined to go to Washington," King declared on March 29. "We feel it is an absolute necessity."

The next march was planned to take place within a few days. King once again flew from Atlanta to Memphis.

And the march took place—peacefully, just as King had dreamed. It was larger than he could have anticipated—35,000 people, black and white, converged from all parts of the country, as in the heroic days of the march on Montgomery and during the historic march on Washington. They marched solemnly through the streets and white Memphis seemed to be dead. There were no aggressive racist crowds, the police did not shout at the marchers. Locks hung on shop doors, show-windows were covered with iron grilles and no one looked out of the windows by order of the police. The only spectators of this march were national guardsmen, standing immobile on the pavements.

The march of solidarity with the garbage collectors which King had prepared became a march in his memory and took place on April 8, four days after his murder.

But let us return to our story.

On April 3 King flew back to Memphis, not knowing that he was flying towards his death.

On the evening of April 3 King delivered a sermon at a black church in Memphis. He reflected on the problem of life and death:

"And then I got into Memphis. And some began to talk about the threats that were out, of what would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers. Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead... Like anybody else, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land.

"I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land.

"So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man..."

Was he troubled by a strange premonition? If so, it was for the last but certainly not the first time. He was threatened with death almost every day—in letters, in shouts from crowds, in anony-

mous telephone calls—and he had a propensity to reflect aloud on the possibilities of premature death. In these reflections flights of religious mysticism were mingled with political realism, for he knew the country in which he led the dangerous life of a struggler. But that was the only way he could live and so he had long been prepared: his fatalism was not an affectation but the sober recognition of a constant, real threat.

"I've solved the problem of personal danger," he observed once. "I live every day with the threat of death, and I came to see many years ago that I couldn't function if I allowed fear to overcome me." And so he preferred to talk about death, not about courage—that went without saying.

Knowing King's custom of staying, where possible, in black districts and at hotels owned by blacks, his friends had taken a room for him at the cheap Lorraine Motel, No. 306, on the second floor. The door opened on to a long balcony with a green railing. To go downstairs one had to walk along the balcony to the staircase.

The same evening or next morning James Ray knew where Dr King was staying, that his room was on the second floor and that he could not avoid the balcony nor, consequently, the gunsight. What was needed was to find a flight path for the bullet. Right below the balcony was a parking lot beyond which was narrow Mulberry Street and a wall about two metres high on whose crest shrubs and grass forced their way out. Farther on up a slope were trees and beyond them a wire fence and the very ugly backyard of a two-storey house whose front faced South Main Street. It was a house where lonely old people lived out their days in furnished rooms. On April 4 a young-looking man in a black suit appeared there wanting a room for one day. The owner Mrs Brewer led him to a room facing north, but the stranger did not like it, saying he would prefer a room on the southern, sunny side. Such a room was available, and from it the Lorraine Motel could be seen.

The rooming-house's common bathroom afforded an even better view of the motel. From it the metallic figures 3, 0 and 6 nailed to a brown door could be clearly seen through the sight of a Remington rifle.

Using his privilege of a guest wishing to refresh himself after travelling, that man with a Southern accent locked himself up in the bathroom. The distance from there to the figures 3, 0 and 6 was about 70 metres.

King spent the day in his room, busy with his various concerns and was in conference with his assistants. He had been invited for

supper to the home of Samuel Kyles, a black clergyman, and at 6 o'clock discussion had to be broken off. Kyles had already arrived and was waiting to take them to his home. Ralph Abernathy was in King's room too. King knotted a black tie with a gold stripe round his powerful neck, looking into the mirror and teasing Kyles.

"I think your wife is too young to cook soul food for us," he said. "She's only thirty-one, isn't she? How can she cook soul food at that age?"

At last King had knotted his tie and he and Kyles left the room. Kyles went downstairs, but King lingered by the green rail of the balcony, waiting for Abernathy, who had still not emerged.

A black Cadillac was parked by the balcony. It had been made available for King's use by the proprietor of a black funeral home in Memphis. King's friends Jesse Jackson and Andrew Young, and the chauffeur Solomon Jones waited beside the Cadillac. All were in the mood for "soul food," conversation and jokes. After supper they were to attend a late meeting.

"Do you know Ben?" Jackson called to King, indicating Ben Branch, a black Chicago musician who was to play and sing at the meeting.

"Yes, that's my man!" King smiled, leaning on the rail. "Be sure to sing 'Precious Lord, Take My Hand' for me tonight, Ben. Sing it real pretty."

Branch said that he would. He knew the sad spiritual.

"It's getting chilly, Dr King," said the chauffeur. "Better take an overcoat."

"O.K., I will," King replied and leaned slightly forward, as if stretching out to these people, who were dear to him, who loved and protected him, who were proud of him and who fussed over him as they did over senior, respected, wise comrades.

He leaned slightly forward, holding the green railing, and at that moment he was struck by a bullet. His friends heard the sound of a shot and the mortal force of nine grammes of flying lead knocked over his thickset figure. Throwing out his arms, King collapsed backwards on to the cement floor of the balcony. The bullet had entered the right side of his neck, smashing the cervical

He was among people who were dear to him, who loved him, took care of him and were proud of him... And at that moment he was struck by a bullet, and the mortal force of nine grammes of flying lead brought King's life to an end.

vertebrae. He looked with wide-open, almond-shaped eyes at Abernathy who ran out of room No. 306. He could not speak.

Clinical death ensued an hour later, but he parted with life at the moment when the bullet felled him and his friends rushed on to the balcony; surrounding his prostrate body, they lifted their arms a little to the right, in the direction of the sunlit wall from which the sound of the shot had come.

The howl of police cars could already be heard. Cameras were already clicking and cine-cameras already whirring, but an ambulance had not yet come and he still lay on his back, his knees bent, his arms thrown out, in his black suit, his face covered with a white towel and his blood flowing on to the cement floor by his head...

"Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me, let me withstand, I am tired, I am weak, exhausted. Lead me through the storm and the night to the light, precious Lord."

Grief does, indeed, have swift feet, especially in the age of television. On that evening of shock and mourning America seemed to me like a person perpetually in a flurry of activity suddenly confronted by a menacing, indisputable judge, who shook it by the neck, scattering everyday distractions to the winds and cried: "Look into your soul! Surely you can see what is happening there?"

And yet millions, entire millions of people—who would dare deny it?—experienced a vengeful joy, a satisfied malice: at last this tiresome troublemaker, this nigger who wanted more than the others, had got what was coming to him.

And somewhere, James Ray, having given the Memphis cops the slip, was speeding in his white Mustang and grinning wryly, for he could tell from the voices of radio announcers that the job had been done and done well.

In the White House apprehensions outweighed grief. What would be the response from the ghettoes? It was not hard to guess. Preventing or at least moderating the response would, however, be more difficult. The president hurried before the television cameras to call upon Americans to reject the blind violence which had struck down Dr King, who lived by non-violence.

But the authorities knew the weaknesses of verbal therapy. First to take action were Henry Loeb, the mayor of Memphis, and Buford Ellington, the governor of Tennessee. Doctors recorded King's death at 7.05 p.m., Memphis time, but Loeb had already introduced a curfew in the city thirty minutes before. Governor Ellington began his television address with an expression of

condolences, but concluded with an announcement that 4,000 national guardsmen, withdrawn, as ill luck would have it, only the previous day, would be returned to Memphis. National guard aircraft were already transferring police trained in riot suppression. The Lorraine Motel was cordoned off, the area having become dangerous, attracting blacks like a magnet to express their grief through anger.

Official mourning was mingled with fear; black mourning, with the fury of impotence. I recall a meeting hastily called in New York's Central Park. The accusations levelled were angry, but how was King to be avenged? How was this stepmother country to be given a good lesson? Thousands of people moved down Broadway towards City Hall. The New York police politely cleared the way for them, halting traffic.

Washington blew up on the day after the assassination. By 3 p.m. the smoke of fires hung like funeral banners over the black districts of the capital, the spring breeze pulling them towards the centre of the city, the White House and the Potomac. In the ghetto white-owned shops were looted and burned and blacks fought with the police and firemen.

Disorder also spread to the centre of the city. Panic raged there, too, as the inhabitants of the ghetto burst into the city centre and attacked shops. Thousands of government employees did not wait for the end of the working day, but fled their offices to escape the raging fury. Thousands of cars crawled out of the city bumper to bumper, avoiding the black districts. White Washington sought refuge in the suburbs and in the neighbouring states of Maryland and Virginia. Despairing of taxis and failing to find room on the packed buses, civil servants and businessmen walked over the Memorial Bridge spanning the Potomac, hastening to reach the other side.

This was a symbolic exodus of that America which Dr King had intended to shake by his poor people's march and which was now thrown into turmoil by the furious mourning of the ghetto.

If only King had seen all these eloquent and contradictory symbols of sorrow, hypocrisy and protest!

Detachments armed with machine-guns stood guard on the broad steps of the Capitol, ready to defend Congress, which had remained deaf to the demand of jobs or wages for poor people.

The White House, the central house of white America, stood against the background of black clouds of smoke, the mournful symbols of black America. The flag over the White House was at

half-mast as a sign of mourning, but seventy-five soldiers drawn up in fighting order guarded its gates.

On April 5 Lyndon Johnson issued two presidential proclamations: one concerned a day of national mourning on Sunday, April 7, the other the immediate bringing of regular troops into the capital.

Two thousand soldiers cordoned off government buildings and mounted guard outside foreign embassies. Five hundred soldiers of the Third Infantry Regiment were moved from nearby Fort Maier. These impressively-built, imposing men were kept for honour guards and ceremonial meetings of foreign heads of state on the White House lawn. Now, dressed in field khaki, they were ready to meet the common people. Two thousand national guardsmen had also been placed on alert.

Mayor of Washington introduced a curfew in the city from 5.30 p.m. to 6.30 a.m. Two thousand blacks had been arrested by the end of the first day of disturbances.

Five blacks were killed. It may be noted that the police were proud of this figure, which they saw as proof of their moderation. They were permitted to shoot only in the most extreme circumstances, knowing from experience that wild firing only inflamed rioters further.

Reinforcements arrived in the capital on Saturday night—the paratroop division which had pacified black rioters in Detroit in July 1967.

The blacks' mourning left in its wake conflagrations, new ruins and burnt-out steel girders standing black and lonely against a sky painted orange by the fires. It also left ransacked shops.

The motive was the murder of a man who had never tired of warning of the chaos which awaited America if it did not pay its historical debt to the oppressed blacks. Now the bill had been presented once again, in blind, unchecked and hopeless protest. Grief was mingled with criminality. Suits, hats, ties, cartons of beer and whisky and colour television sets were hauled out of shops. And although it was clear that order would triumph, it was also clear that this would be the order of greater strength, not the order of brotherhood and justice which King had dreamed of.

The chronicle of mourning in dozens of other cities was a varied one, including church services, fires, flags at half-mast, the crackle of shots, silent marches, the shriek of police and fire sirens, portraits in black frames, tear gas, the lamentations of black women and the frozen smiles on the faces of naked dummies thrown out of shop-windows.

The ghettoes wept and exploded for five long days. Only on April 9, the day of the funeral, did quiet descend on America as the blessed sound of bells was heard and thousands of voices across the country sang "We shall overcome",

Chicago, Baltimore, Detroit, Cincinnati, Buffalo, Kansas City, Newark—explosions of protest occurred in more than one hundred cities. They were extinguished by police and 61,000 national guardsmen—never before had so many soldiers been sent into American cities at the same time. Thirty-nine people were killed and two thousand wounded. More than ten thousand were arrested.

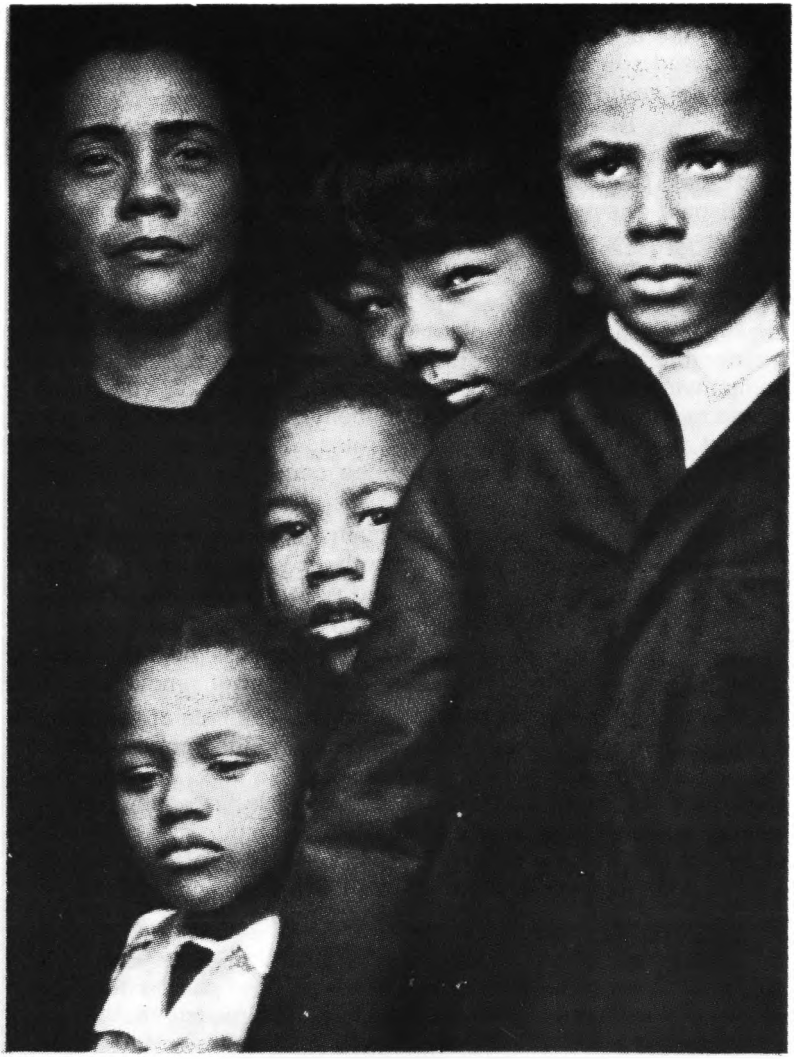
The "apostle of non-violence" knew nothing of the hurricane his death had aroused or of how many people would be accompanying him into the ground, an escort which, of course, he would have refused. This accompaniment of the dead, the wounded and the arrested, of smoking ruins, devastated shops and national commotion showed that the cause for which he had lived was incomplete.

Flown to his native Atlanta, he lay in a coffin in the chapel of a theological college; in the black Southern View cemetery a large white headstone was being inscribed with the epitaph: "Free At Last, Free At Last, Thank God Almighty I'm Free At Last."

A queue 1.5 kilometres long waited to pass by the coffin. Black women lamented over him in the manner of simple people.

Yes, he had gone, yet he also remained. The face of the living King, the furious prophet, appeared on television screens and in the pages of newspapers and magazines. He was, indeed, now spoken of as a prophet. Martin Luther King, in becoming part of history, scorched the hearts of his fellow-countrymen with his words, grimly warning them that misfortune lay in wait for people who had learned to fly in the air like birds and swim in the seas like fish, but who had not learned to walk on the earth like brothers.

He was buried as no other black had been during the 350 years of the blacks' grief-filled history in America. King was accompanied by 150,000 people on his last journey, four miles through the streets of Atlanta from the Ebenezer Church, where he had been the pastor, to Morehouse College, from which he had graduated twenty years before. At the funeral service in the Ebenezer Church the eminent sat in the pews side by side with ordinary citizens, ranging from Vice-President Humphrey to King's parishioners. President Johnson was prevented from coming only by reasons of security. Jacqueline Kennedy, widow of



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the assassinated president, was there and Robert Kennedy, too, was present, unaware that two months later he would meet his death in Los Angeles. All the other contenders for the presidency—Richard Nixon, Eugene McCarthy and Nelson Rockefeller—flew to Atlanta, after declaring an interval of mourning in their electoral campaigns.

Television made the entire nation a witness of the requiem at the Ebenezer Church. The concealed eyes of television cameras passed over the faces of the country's political elite.

The thousands for whom there was no room in the small church waited on the street—the unknown and the famous, mayors of large cities and Hollywood stars.

These people, in the church and outside it, and millions sitting in front of their television sets, heard once again the passionate eloquence of Martin Luther King, tinged with mysticism, yet earthy. They learned that this man, who walked side by side with death for so long, two months before had spoken in his church of the speech he would like to hear over his coffin. At the request of his brother, a tape recorder was switched on and King's words, tremulous as the pulsation of an exposed heart, were heard over King's coffin.

"Every now and then I guess we all think realistically about that day when we will be victimized with what is life's final common denominator—that something we call death.

"We all think about it and every now and then I think about my own death and I think about my own funeral. And every now and then I ask myself what it is that I would want said and I have the word to you this morning.

"If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral.

"And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy tell him not to talk too long.

"And every now and then I wonder what I want him to say.

"Tell him not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize—that isn't important.

"Tell him not to mention that I have 300 or 400 other awards—that's not important. Tell him not to mention where I went to school.

"I'd like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King tried to give his life serving others.

"I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King tried to love somebody.

"I want you to say that day that I tried to be right and to walk with them. I want you to be able to say that day that I did try to feed the hungry. I want you to be able to say that day that I did try in my life to clothe the naked. I want you to say on that day that I did try in my life to visit those who were in prison.

"And I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity.

"Yes, if you want to, say that I was a drum major. Say that I was a drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness.

"And all of the other shallow things will not matter.

"I won't have any money to leave behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind.

"And that is all I want to say..."

It was an impressive funeral, but, without blasphemy, I would also say that it was a strange funeral.

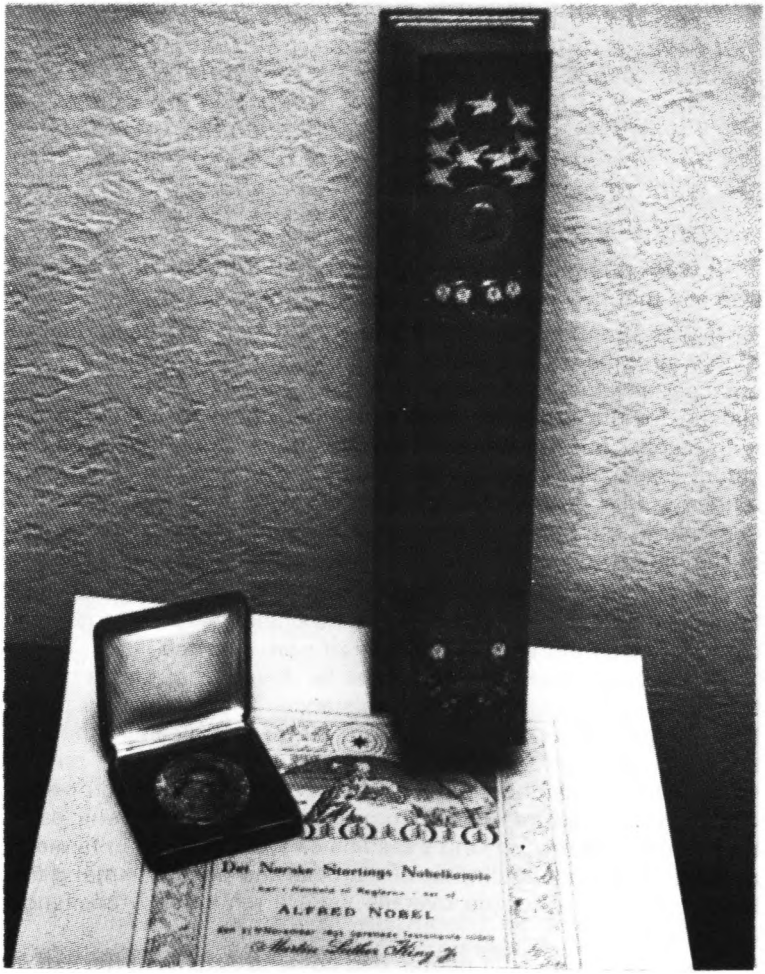
It was strange because that America which had been deaf to King's struggle, that America which had turned away from the preacher developing into the leader of his people and created the climate for the Memphis shot, had now come to King's coffin, with respect but not without considerations of its own, with the aim of associating itself with him, canonising him in its own way, rendering him posthumously safe and taking him away from the deprived in the name, of course, of the great, non-existent unity of the nation.

The struggle for King's legacy began at his grave-side and false claimants appeared beside his true heirs, reducing the great struggler to an inoffensive "apostle of non-violence".

These false pretenders could not be driven from King's grave, but they were met with silent resistance. The coffin was taken from the church to Morehouse College not in a gleaming hearse, but on a farm cart with high wooden sides, drawn by a pair of mules. Mules were the motive power of Southern share-croppers, who had received no benefit from the flood of motor vehicles in their country. Many of King's associates were dressed in farmer's overalls—the working clothes of marches and prisons. Among the black mourning suits the overalls were a reminder, a challenge and a vow.

Tens of thousands of people had come to Atlanta at the call of

In December 1964, Martin Luther King was Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He compelled American society to look with fresh eyes at its black fellow citizens. He aroused in black Americans a feeling of self-respect, pride and confidence in their own strength. Finally, he achieved something to which he perhaps had never even aspired. He himself became an example for those for whom "the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace is more precious than diamonds or silver or gold".



King believed that in the nuclear age the true choice in international relations was not between violence and non-violence but between non-violence and non-existence. In the middle of April 1967 Dr. King and Dr. Spock, a well-known humanist, marched together for the first time in an anti-war demonstration.

their consciences to honour King. He took part in this march as a man no longer alive, but he would, of course, have been glad to see so many open honest faces of the people, both black and white, striding forward.

"We shall overcome..." The song dominated the column, which seemed to have no end. It concluded the memorial meeting on the lawn of Morehouse College. So great a mass of strugglers for equality had not come together since the march on Washington and they followed custom by joining hands and swaying to the rhythm of the song, concluding sadly, proudly and resolutely:

We are not afraid,
We are not afraid,
We are not afraid today,
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe
We shall overcome some day.

* * *

Having turned over my duties of a correspondent to my colleague from *Izvestia,* I returned from New York to Moscow. I had experienced the pain and bitterness of April 4, 1968, when America was stunned by the news of the murder in Memphis. And I remember the feeling of loss that came to me on April 9 as I watched the funeral on television. That feeling arises when a great man with a great heart leaves the world—a heart so great and strong that its beating is conveyed to many thousands of other hearts.

The tragedy of Martin Luther King, a figure apparently so unusual in the America of the second half of the 20th century, grew into the tragedy of America. A country must be great to give birth to such a son. A country must be cruel to kill him.

Unlike some vaunted public figures and statesmen who sometimes outlive themselves already in their lifetime, truly great people live on even after their death, live on and become immortal in the minds of their contemporaries and of future generations.

Dr Martin Luther King, a selfless fighter for equal rights and justice for his black brothers and sisters, by his heart and mind perceived another, broader and more general truth of our time. Yes, he was one of those great people our age demands most urgently and insistently, people who urge that efforts be united to save mankind from the disastrous arms race, from the threat of universal annihilation.

It is from this point of view that we are now looking more and more closely at statesmen and other outstanding contemporary figures to see if they have risen to the level of their special responsibility.

In this sense as well, the great humanist Martin Luther King has earned the right to immortality.

Станислав Николаевич Кондрашов

МАРТИН ЛЮТЕР КИНГ

на английском языке

Цена 40 к.

Martin Luther King

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